

SETH HARCHANDRAI VISHANDAS

(Father of Modern Karachi)

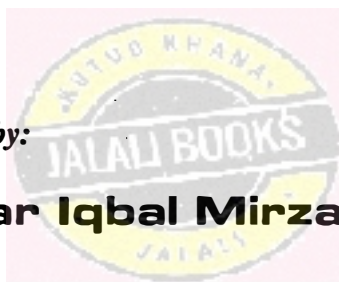


Compiled by:
Khadim Hussain Soomro

SETH HARCHANDRAI VISHANDAS

Translated by:

Zafar Iqbal Mirza



Compiled by:

Khadim Hussain Soomro

Sain Publishers, Sehwan Sharif

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

First Edition:

By: Khadim Hussain Soomro

for Sain Publishers

Sehwan Sharif

Phone: 0229-620474

Lahore (Ph.) 5713360

Composed by:

Tasawar Hussain

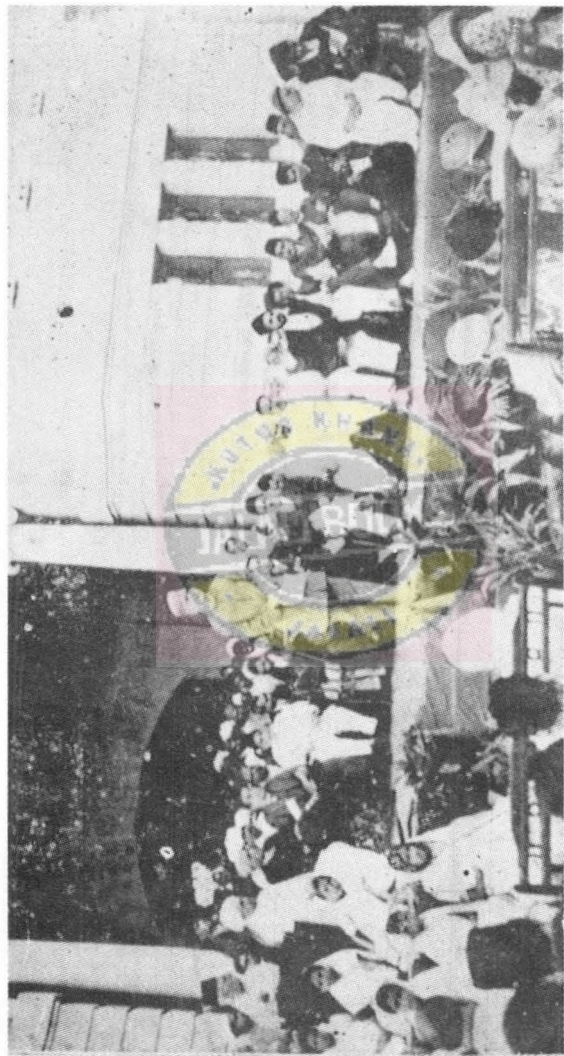
Printed at Azeem Aleem Printers

Darbar Market, Lahore

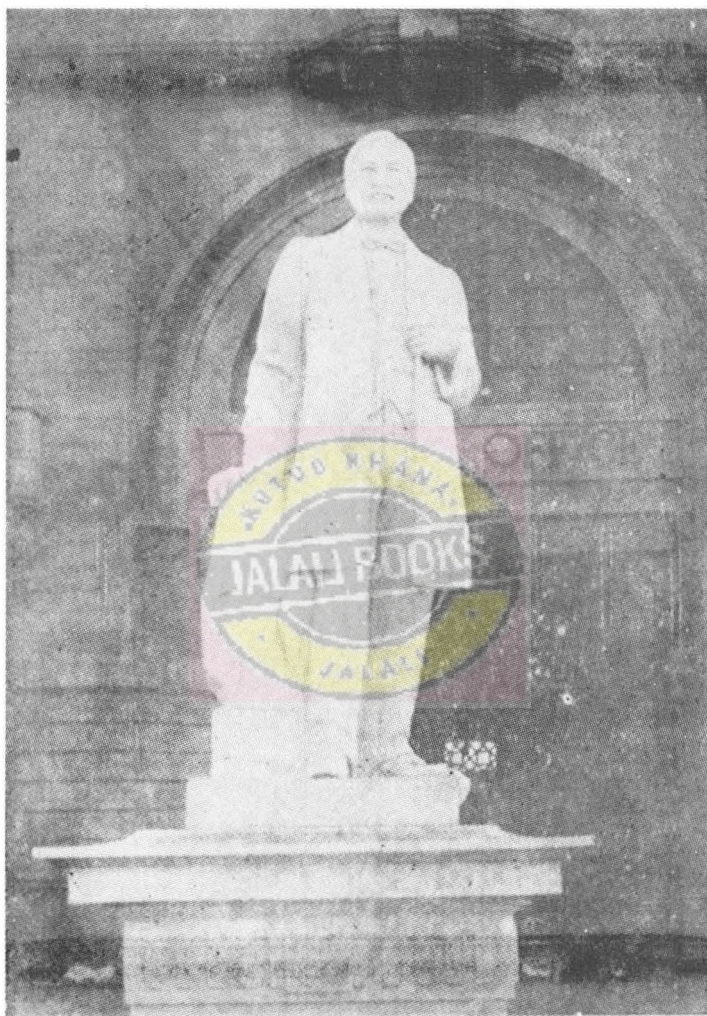
Price: Rs. 150/=

US \$ 5

First Edition: September, 1996



Unveiling Ceremony of the statue of Seth HARCHANDRAI in front of the Karachi Municipal Corporation Building. Mr. JAMSHED N.R. MEHTA is seen standing.



SETH HARCHANDRAI'S STATUE
In front of Karachi Municipal Corporation Building

Publisher's Note

This is a humble effort to introduce a great son of Sindh to the younger generation. Very little is known today about Seth Harchandrai Vishandas, one of the founders of modern Karachi. Born in a small village in Manjho Tehsil Kotri, he attained great heights as a lawyer, as the president of the Karachi municipal committee and, finally, as a leader of all-India stature. Sindh, especially Karachi, owes him a great debt of gratitude. When he entered public life, Sindh was in the backwaters of politics in the sub-continent. By the time he died, Sindh was among the leading provinces in mainstream politics. He was an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity. Gentle and generous, erudite and emancipated, persuasive and polite, Harchandrai Vishandas was a paragon of virtue. We owe it to Sindh to honour him and to perpetuate his memory. This book is a small effort towards that end. It is to be hoped that it will lead to a detailed research on his life and work. In the end it remains for us to acknowledge our debt to Mr. Kishanchand Bharvani Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan, the grandson of Seth Harchandrai Vishandas for his invaluable help in providing us with source material without which this book would not have been possible.

Khadim Hussain Soomro

Foreword

Mr. Khadim Hussain Soomro has compiled material on the life of an eminent Sindhi lawyer of the early twentieth century, Seth Harchandrai 1862-1928. Born in a rich Hindu business family, Seth Harchandrai inherited all the good traits of his father Seth Vishandas who, apart from being a business tycoon was also a land owner of consequence. He is reported to have participated in the first three meetings of installation of the All India Congress and the fourth session was attended by Seth Harchandrai.

Law, Politics and Social Service was deemed inseparable by a certain class of progressive gentry who considered it a part of their duty to prepare the people of British India for realising the goal of Independence. Having considered the holocaust of 1857, the devastation of famines and the exploitation of white merchants turned rulers of India a few visionaries, in anticipation of a protracted struggle for emancipation of the masses, availed of the opportunities the newly enacted laws offered by establishing societies, educational institutions, financial concerns, print media, active participation in the management of local bodies etc. etc. to bring home the concept of participation of the people in the affairs of the state. All said and done the stalwarts of that generation were, for the first time in the history of the sub-continent, laying the foundation of a modern nation state. They were creating circumstances to provide opportunities to the Indians to gain experience in the administrative sector of a modern state. This contribution was the intellectual wing of the freedom movement.

Harchandrai was one of the pioneers who sold the idea of separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency. The motive behind this move was the realisation that the administrative and social problems of Sindh could be solved only after it acquires the status of a separate province. In the annual session of All India Congress of 1913 Harchandrai raised this demand in his presidential address delivered in the capacity of Chairman Reception Committee.

Rais Ghulam Muhammad Khan Bhurgari, another eminent Barrister and a big landlord of Sindh, also joined Seth Sahib, as a supporting member of the All India Congress, in the efforts to raise the issue of a separate Sindh. Both of them were however of the view that Sindh leadership should concentrate on ameliorating the social condition of the Sindhi people rather than participating in the national politics at the platform of All India Congress. It is this attitude that prevented Harchandrai from applying for the congress party ticket for election in the Indian legislative bodies. On deeper thought it appears that in the wake of movement following the decision to partition Bengal new political concepts were taking birth: Provincial autonomy, lingual integrity of provinces, nationalism, independence from foreign rule, representation in administrative institutions and import export policies of the British government. Politics of Petitions to apprise the government of public demands and rebellions activities by certain groups was emerging as a reality on the political horizon of the sub-continent. It is in this background of state repression and exploitation and the urge of natives to carve out a respectable place for self rule that the conduct of leaders of public opinion has to be appreciated.

Sain G.M. Syed in his Book, the Separation of Sindh from Bombay, has paid glowing tribute to Seth Harchandrai and Rais Ghulam Muhammad Khan

Bhurgari. In his view both of them were pioneers in this project. He maintains that Maulana Ubaid Ullah Sindhi, Muhammad Shah Amrooti, Maulana Muhammad Sadiq of Khadda Karachi were the revolutionary workers whereas the legal battle for separation of Sindh from Bombay was spearheaded by Seth Harchandrai and Barrister Bhurgari.

The story of the life of Seth Harchandrai is in fact a chapter of the political history of Sindh. It has been said that Seth Sahib is the father of modern Karachi because he was associated with the Municipality of Karachi since 1888 either as an elected counsellor, or its President for the period 1911-1921 or its legal advisor. Seth Harchandrai was elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council (1910) and also an elected member of the Indian Legislative Assembly (1921-28) till his death.

It is also reported that Seth Harchandrai was one of the movers for establishing Sukkur Barrage in Sindh. He had to face hostile response from the Bombay aristocracy which thought that huge expenses would be involved in this project. The separation of Sindh from Bombay was resented by Hindu population because it would mean another muslim majority province in India. However Seth Harchandrai was above these petty communal considerations and he strove to help develop the soil that provided opportunities to him and his ancestors.

Seth Nihalchand, Rai Bahadar Vishindas and Harchandrai, three generations of notables in quick succession in the nineteenth century Sindh, was a progressive and a promising lot. Pioneers in every sense of the word. Biggest contractor of the forests of Sindh, owners of ginning factories, rice thrashing units and a fleet of boats to undertake transportation of merchandise upto Persian Gulf and commission agency in Karachi were no mean achievements for the family. The other side of the picture is more attractive because the generations had a living interest in the development

work of Karachi. Providing hospitals, dispensaries, educational centres and civic amenities claimed plenty of their time and resources.

It is reported that in 1897 when the plague epidemic broke out in Sindh, Vishandas Nihalchand spared no efforts to provide relief to the affectees irrespective of caste or creed. The suffering humanity was provided prompt medical care, free food and necessary clothing. He would personally visit the villages to supervise the distribution of facilities.

As a forest contractor of consequence he had permitted the poor peasantry to freely use the dead wood and the cuttings obtained from the pruning of wild growth. This would keep the hearth of the poor warm. And the fishermen enjoyed freedom from payment of taxes or fares for the use of ferries. This was indeed in sharp contrast to the Banya-money lender attitude who is interested only in relieving his client of all the belongings. The British Government, in appreciation of his services to his people, honoured him with the title of Rai Bahadur, a degree less than knighthood.

A pertinent question arises for consideration: Being a part of feudal society and having secured success in commercial enterprises at a time when exploitation of India and India resources was the guiding principle of white masters, how come that this family developed an attitude of service towards humanity. The answer is provided by the life pattern that Nihalchand and Vishandas adopted.

The grandfather of Harchandrai had an inclination towards mysticism and Vishindas in his own time as a young man travelled upto Lahore in search of a saint who would help him solve the riddles of life. He found a guide, a savant in the person of Gulabdas in Lahore, who imparted instructions to the inquisitive pupil. After receiving training at the feet of a godly person, he returned to Sindh a transformed Vishandas. A different

man altogether, he not only took control of the expanding business of his father but also became a commanding captain of his inner self. There was complete harmony in his thought and practice. He had discovered the purpose of life and his obligation towards that purpose had to be honoured.

This metamorphosis was quite in tune with the local traditions as Sindh and the Punjab inherit a rich heritage of the mystic way of life. Hindu rishees, Muslim saints and Sikh gurus influenced the thought process of their times in their own way and enriched mystic discipline in the multilingual, multiracial and multireligious tract of land with their experiences. These enlightened souls did not consider the differences of religion, caste, creed or language as an impediment to social intercourse. They believed that they belonged to this soil and were the creatures of one and the same God. The shrines and gaddies of these godly men were the places where heterogeneous elements could meet and have a free dialogue. They influenced each other. They understood each other as they were animated by the supreme passion of love. These were the guides who gave openness to human vision and sowed the seed of harmony, love for the fellow creature and service to humanity.

The message of Syed Ali Hajveri, Syed Nizam ud Din, Bakhtiar Kaki, Farid ud Din, Guru Nanak, Shah Latif, Sachal Sarmast, Budha, Shahbaz Qalandar, Mian Mir, Sami, Bhagat Kabir, Shah Inayat Soofi, Madan Faqir, Madho Lal and other illustrious names even today attracts pilgrims from all walks of life and from every creed. Their tombs or relics symbolise life and hope and radiate the message of love and service. It is therefore not a surprise that Harchandrai inherited and maintained the tradition of service to humanity.

Both as a lawyer and an elected member of the legislative bodies, Seth Harchandrai was a contemporary

of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah whose efforts for the solution of political and constitutional issues of the Indian sub-continent and also for separation of Sindh from Bombay are very well known. The most significant aspect of the political leadership of the early twentieth century, apart from the element of tolerance they professed for Hindu Muslim unity, was their effort to inculcate traditions and the trend to channelise basic issues in a sound political and constitutional avenues. Many a battles of political nature were fought and won by eminent lawyers who introduced the concept of constitutionalism in the sub-continent. The element of bloody resistance was being supplanted by politics consensus thereby adding a new dimension to the freedom movement. It is on account of such sober and serious efforts of the constitutional lawyers who gave an opening to the Britishers to evolve fundamental laws at different periods of their role which ultimately resulted in the Indian Independence Act of 1947.

The role of prominent lawyers of different provinces of British India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in establishing tradition of service to humanity is a glorious chapter in the history of liberation movements. They were the pioneers who had the vision and the strength to speak for the mother land and their fellow countrymen. They worked hard to safeguard the social, political, cultural, administrative and religious rights of the future generations. They worked without expecting any return from their people because they were clear in their mind that the day of deliverance will not be possible in their life time but it did not dissuade them to continue efforts for the liberation of humanity. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to these noble souls without whose efforts the independence movement would not have borne fruit in August 1947.

It is alleged that Mr. Jinnah worked as an apprentice with Harchandrai Vishandas, immediately after his return to Karachi. It is however certain, on the authority of Miss Fatima Jinnah that Jinnah Poonja wanted Mr. Jinnah to start his legal career with either of the two leading legal firms of Karachi: Lalchand and Company and Harchandrai Vishandas and Company. Both the firms were keen to have Mr. Jinnah as an apprentice. It appears more probable that Mr. Jinnah did attend the chambers of Mr. Harchandrai because the latter was looking after the legal problems of Mr. Jinnah Poonja and Mr. Jinnah must have contributed towards the settlement of the cases of his father. The fact that Mr. Jinnah settled in Bombay for legal practice shows that he wanted a bigger place to try his luck and develop his talents rather than accepting a secondary position in his home town, which had not much to offer in the various dimensions of law.

The relevance of Harchandrai to Karachi can be assessed from this fact that after his death a statue committee of the leading Karachites was formed which finalised its deliberations and executed its project under the chairmanship of the commissioner Mr. Hudson. The members of the Committee included T.G. Elphinstone, F. Claton, W.N. Richardson, Sobhraj Chetomal, Dr. A.D. Sharaf, Lakhmichand Aesardas, Qimatrai Aasomal, Keewalmal Goordandas, Hasasingh Lalsingh, Hoshing N.A. Dinsha, M. Maskeetha, Mir Ayub Khan, Bhagwandas Lakhram Ahoja, Deepchand Chandomal, Durgdas B. Adwani, Ghulam Ali. G. Chagla, Hareeddas, Laljee, Dr. G.T. Hingorani, Sheewaram Dewonmal, Hareelal S. Sharma, Aesardas Varindmal, Jamshed N.R. Mehta, Jehangir N. Pnathki, S.H. Lila, Sohrab H. Katrik, Moolchand Koromal, Moolchand Kheeldas, N.D. Malik, K. Panya, Shoqutrai Werhomal, Shortun J. Mohata, Hasomal Cheelaram, Lala Jaswantrai, Yusuf Ali Ali Bhai. A statue was installed in the compound wall of the

Karachi Municipal Corporation, in a very well attended function where the leading personalities paid homage to the services rendered by Harchandrai.

58-G, *SYED AFZAL HAIDAR (Advocate)*
Gulberg III, Lahore. Supreme Court of Pakistan,
September 1996 Member, Council of Islamic Ideology



Seth Harchandrai Vishandas

Seth Harchandrai Vishandas was born in the village Manjho in May, 1862, and received his early education at a school founded by his father, Seth Vishandas.

After completing his primary education in Manjho, Harchandrai was sent to Kotri which at the time was a flourishing commercial centre, a railway junction and a river port. Many British and Anglo-Indian Christian officers used to live there. The missionaries had set up an Anglo-vernacular school. In the beginning, Hindu parents were reluctant to send their children to this school, fearing that this might alienate them from their own religion. Seth Vishandas had read the vedas and was well-versed in other Hindu religious texts but, at the same time, he was of a liberal bent of mind and was a farsighted man who could read into the future. He decided to send his son to the missionary school despite opposition from his contemporaries. Set Vishandas had a spacious bungalow in Kotri where Harchandrai lived in great comfort.

After studying up to the middle standard in Kotri, Harchandrai got admitted to the N.G.V High School in Karachi where, too, Set Vishandas owned a bungalow but Harchandrai preferred to live with his maternal grandfather. He matriculated in 1878. The matriculation examination was held in Karachi that year but before that, Sindhi candidates had to go to Bombay for the purpose which was not the easiest of things to do as can be judged from the following account.

Kaka Bherumal Meharchand writes in his *A History of the Hindus of Sindh*:

There was a small ship available for taking mail out of Karachi and bringing in. A few passengers could also

travel by it. In the beginning, the teachers encouraged the following Sindhi students to travel to Bombay: Diwan Noolrai Shouqerai, Diwan Dia Ram Jethmal, Diwan Chandanmal Khalnani and Mr. Choparmal Khundanmal Punjabi. Among these only Mr. Punjabi succeeded while the others never tried to go to Bombay again because they had found their first journey extremely rigorous. They got into practical life without matriculating.

Later, Seth Alumal Tikamdas Bhojwani undertook the 15-16 day journey by sea to reach Bombay. The overland route was even more difficult. The Karachi-Kotri rail link became operative in 1861. Before this, people used to travel by camel. For going to Bombay one had to travel by steamboat from Kotri to Multan from where one went by rail to Lahore. From Lahore one went to Delhi by rail. At the time, the Bombay-Baroda Central India Railway was operational but it was limited to the Bombay-Ahmadabad route. Therefore, those wanting to go to Bombay from Delhi had to travel by ramshackle vehicles which used to reach Ahmedabad via Jaipur, Ajmer, Palanpur, etc. It was an extremely tortuous and long route. From Ahmedabad, as we have seen, one could go to Bombay by rail. A study of Diwan Gidumal's life reveals that when he wanted to appear the matriculation examination in 1874, it took him four months to reach Bombay.

This was the reason why boys preferred to take up jobs after doing middle school instead of going to Bombay to matriculate. When the matriculation examination began to be conducted in Karachi in 1878 and there was no need to go to Bombay for the purpose, greater interest was generated in higher studies. One can well imagine what must have been the standard of education in Karachi until 1878. The city had just two high schools — a missionary institution which was established in 1846 and the NGV government high school which was opened ten years later.

After matriculating, Harchandrai went to Bombay for higher education. He joined the Elphinstone College from where he graduated in 1882. Since his father was a rich businessman, Harchandrai lived in style in Bombay. After graduating, he did his law.

College education was available only in Bombay and very few Sindhis ventured to go there because of the difficulties involved. Diwan Dayaram Gidumal who had himself undergone the rigorous of travel to Bombay, established the first college in Karachi in 1887. It was called the Sindh Arts College in the first few years of its life but was later named after its founder, Dayaram Jethmal. But only the initials were used — D.J. College.

The college gave great impetus to higher education and the number of graduates began to increase steadily.

The University of Bombay was chartered in 1857 while the D.G. College was established in 1887 but in these 30 years a mere 15 or 16 people graduated or roughly one graduate after every two years.

Those who graduated from the Elphinstone College during these 30 years are listed below:

No.	Year	Name	Division
1.	1865	Mr. Choharmal Kundanmal	I
2.	1867	Alumal Tikamdas Bhojwani	II
3.	1872	Mirza Sadiq Ali Faridoon Beg	III
4.	1875	Tekchand Odhudas Waswani	II
5.	1878	Dayaram Gidumal Shahani*	II
6.	1882	Harchandrai Vishandas Bharvani	II
7.	1884	Tahilram Khemchand Wazirani	II
8.	1884	Wazirmal Uttamchand Lalwani	II
9.	1886	Mulchand Kodumal Jagtiani	II
10.	1886	Hiranand Khemsingh Adwani	II
11.	1886	Mathradas Jawahri	II
12.	1886	Himmatsingh Gajsingh Advani	II
13.	1886	Dalputrai Rochiram Lalwani	II

(* Shahani was also awarded a scholarship)

From among these, Diwan Dayaram Gidumal (1882), Seth Harchandrai Vishandas (1885) and Diwan Tahilram Khemchand Wazirani (1886) did law in the years bracketed against their names. Dr. Tarachand Jairam Wadhvani did his LMS in 1886 to become the first physician in Sindh.

Seth Harchandrai Vishandas returned home after doing his law. Before him Dayaram Gidumal Shahani was the only lawyer in Sindh who made a great name for himself. Seth Harchandrai was later to declare Gidumal as his hero in his diary and it is a fact that Gidumal left a deep imprint on Harchandrai's mind.

On his return from Bombay, Harchandrai accepted a subordinate job in the Shikarpur court under advice from Gidumal. Government servants in those days were held in great public esteem and awe. There were only a handful of Sindhi graduates with only two lawyers. Thus there was great scope for advancement for educated young people. That is why Harchandrai joined government service.

Seth Vishandas did not approve of his son's decision to accept a junior position in a Shikarpur court. How could a great and prosperous businessman's son do that? The father could not stand this. Therefore, he went to Shikarpur and persuaded his son to resign. Harchandrai returned to Karachi and decided to start his own law practice.

As a Lawyer

Seth Harchandrai set up his office on Bunder Road near the Dinso Hall in 1886. In those days, Diwan Dayaram Jethmal, Diwan Tekchand Odhudas, Hasan Ali Afandi, Eugene Leggat and Constable were the most prominent lawyers in Karachi. Harchandrai had to make a name for himself in competition with these established and renowned lawyers. For this a great deal of hard work was required. Harchandrai was an extremely talented youngman of liberal views. He knew the art of public speaking well and he was charming in private conversation; he was sharp as a razor at repartee. And, above all, he was a born advocate who served his clients honesty and to the best of his ability.

Harchandrai was a champion of truth, a man of high moral character who had the courage of his convictions. He came to be rated as one of the top lawyers of Karachi in a short period of time. Soon he began to get briefs from all over Sindh.

It was because of his qualities of head and heart that he was elected honorary secretary of the Karachi Bar Association which was established in 1890. He held this office for 38 years running which was proof positive of the love, affection and respect the legal fraternity had for him.

So great was his concern for the future of his employees that 17 clerks of his law office, Harchandrai and Co. themselves became advocates. Some of them became known in their own right. Diwan Aesarsingh, Hazarisingh, Qimatrai Bhojraj, Kodumal Lekhraj and Asoodomal Rewachand became members of the Harchandrai law company. Qimatrai was elected

president of the Karachi Bar Association after Harchandrai's death.

Harchandrai devoted much time to social welfare despite the heavy load of criminal and civil cases on him. He was equally at home in both.

His death was widely mourned. A memorial meeting was held in the Khalikdino Hall which was full of capacity. People belonging to all schools of thought were present there. The meeting was presided over by the commissioner of Sindh, Mr. Hudson. Speaking on the occasion, he said:

I come to know Seth Harchandrai when I was a young and inexperienced magistrate while he was already beginning to make a name for himself. That was years ago but I distinctly remember that whenever he appeared in my court, he assisted me to a great extent and I always knew that he had come to help and not to obfuscate."

Seth Harchandrai always followed three golden rules: Not to interrupt his line of argument, not to waste the court's time needlessly and not to annoy the judges.

In the last days of his life, Seth Harchandrai devoted much of his time to civic and national issues. It is not surprising that he reached such heights in law as no-one else could attain.

The Karachi Municipality

(A brief History)

Sindh was annexed by the British in 1843. Sir Charles Napier defeated the Talpurs who were then the rulers. Napier became the first governor of Sindh. Four years earlier on February 7, 1839, the British captured the Manhora Fort and Karachi fell to them. They turned the small town as it then was into a military encampment.

Karachi's original inhabitants lived in the ancient quarters of the city which is now called Old Town. This part was overpopulated with little or no sanitation. There was no system of garbage removal. The only scavengers were dogs, donkeys and birds. Stinking waste water in open sewer lines would evaporate under the scorching sun but not disappear altogether.

The British cantonment was quite some distance away. There was a cholera epidemic in 1846 in which countless people died. To bring the situation under control, Napier set up a board of conservancy on which civil and military officials were represented. The board succeeded in checking the epidemic and sanitary conditions in the city improved somewhat. However, the board was dissolved in 1851 for want of financial resources.

Nevertheless, the board's performance created awareness among the people that the city's condition could be improved through concerted efforts. There was a willingness on the part of the citizens to pay a little in taxes. Consequently, the Karachi municipal commission was formed in 1852. This marked the beginning of the

municipality. The commission's ex-officio president was Sir H.B.E. Frere. Other members were Sheikh Ghulam Hussain, Qazi Nur Muhammad, Seth Naeonmal Bhojwani, Seth Saibena Memon, Seth Khemchand Vishandas and Maghatmal. Police captain A.C. Marsten and Lieutenant A.P. Arthur were ex-officio members. In addition Capt. W.H. Preedy and his deputy were to be members whenever in Karachi. More members were added later.

The commissioner of Sindh was given additional authority in 1859. Frere resigned from the commission the same year. He was succeeded by the collector, Lt. A.F. Belases to be followed by Col. C.F. Boulton after whom a market was named in the city. The collector of Karachi remained the ex-officio president of the municipality till 1884. From January 1885 to 1910, these presidents were nominated by the government. The following served as presidents during this period:

James Grant: January 1885-November 1886

Alexander Mac Hitch: November 1886 - December 1890

Adharam Moolchand: January 1891 - December 1895

James Cuery: December 1891 - May 1895

G. Pawman: May 1895 - March 1896

Tahilram Khemchand March 1896 - October 1905

T.L.F. Beaumont October 1905 - March 1910

Sir Charles Mwles: March 1910 - September 1910

On October 10, 1910, the members of the municipality were empowered to elect their own presidents. But the elections had to be endorsed by the government. The following were elected president:

Sir Charles Mules: October 1910 - October 1911.

Seth Halachandrai Vishandas: October 1911
October 1921.

After 1921, the condition of official approved of the elections by the government was withdrawn.

From May 1921 to October 1933, the following were elected presidents of the municipality.

Ghulam Ali Chagla: May 1921 - April 1922.

Jamshed Nassuerwanji: April 1922 - October 1933

The following are the developments which led to the formation of the Karachi Municipal Corporation:

1846: The board of conservancy was constituted.

1853: The Karachi municipal commission was set up.

1879: The Bombay District Municipal Act was extended to Sindh.

1901: The third District Municipal Act, Bombay, was extended to Sindh.

1910: The municipality members got the right to elect their own presidents.

1921: The municipal electorate was extended and the constitution of the municipality was improved through better legislation.

1933: The Karachi Municipal Corporation came into being.

The president was replaced by a mayor but the latter's powers were whittled down. There was, though, great honour in being elected mayor. The mayor was elected every year and it was decided that he should belong to different communities each year. From 1933 to 1947, the following served as Mayors of Karachi.

Jamshed Nausserwanji, Tikamdas Wadhmal, Qazi Khuda Bux, Ardeshir H. Mama, Durgadas G. Advani, Hatim A-Alvi, R.K. Sidhwa, Lalaji Mehrotra, Muhammad Hashim Gazdar, Sohrab K.H. Katrak, Shimbunath Moolraj, Yusuf Haroon, Emanuel Misquita, Vishramdas Dewandas, Hakeem Muhammad Ahsan Fateh Muhammad and G.A. Allana.

In 1948, the Corporation was dissolved and the government appointed an advisory board.

Role in the Municipality

Seth Harchandrai was elected member of the Karachi Municipality in 1888. He was then only 26. He was associated with the municipality for 33 years. He was a member of the civic body from 1888 to 1896. His party leader Diwan Tahilram Khemchand was appointed president of the municipality in 1896. The same year, Harchandrai resigned from the municipality and became its legal adviser in order to propose measures for civic improvement in the city. In this capacity, he served the municipality well and gained some useful experience himself. Diwan Tahilram died in 1905 at the age of 42. Harchandrai succeeded him as party leader and was re-elected to the municipality in 1910 and was unanimously chosen president a year later. By dint of hard work, astuteness and ability, Harchandrai became a popular public figure.

Till 1880, only those people were regarded as important who had access to the bureaucracy. They did little to serve the masses. Their only interest was self-interest. From 1846 to 1884, bureaucrats dominated the municipality. Only those were nominated to the civic body who were in the good books of the bureaucrats and played to their tune. They were not bothered about the city. Their only concern was how to keep the Sahibs happy.

After 1880, some young Sindhis started going to Bombay for higher education. They were greatly impressed by the socio-economic conditions in the big city. The social welfare work being done by the Parsi and Marhata communities enkindled in them the desire to do the same in Sindh. When these young people

returned to their native land, they decided to turn their dreams into reality and thus were the foundations laid for the social transformation of Sindh in general and Karachi in particular.

A social welfare association was formed in Karachi. Its members were willing to make sacrifices for public weal. These people were the pride of Sindh. Among them were Diwan Dayaram Jethmal, Diwan Dayaram Gidumal, Prof. Barjauji Padshah, Sadho Noolrai Sadho Hiranand, Korumal Chandanmal Khalnani Nagendranath Gupta, Dr. Mirza, Jafar Fadu, Yusuf Ali Alvi, Diwan Tahilram Khemchand and Seth Harchandrai Vishandas.

This association worked hard to create social awareness in the people. They did this through the Press and through public lectures. In order to improve civic conditions, they decided to join the municipality which required fresh blood.

From 1885 onward, the municipality began to have nominated and elected members. There was great struggle for getting elected. Those in control had close links with top bureaucrats. Voting was not by secret ballot. Every voter had to tell the polling officer that he was voting for such and such candidate. This put great moral pressure on the electors.

The association decided to take part in the 1887 municipal elections. A party was set up under the leadership of Diwan Tahilram Khemchand. Seth Tahilram, Seth Harchandrai and Nagendranath Gupta were the moving spirits behind this party whose members were always keen to work for the betterment of the people. Therefore, there was a lot of public respect and affection for them. However, there were great practical difficulties in their way, the uppermost among them being the open voting system which made it almost impossible for the electors to vote according to the dictates of their conscience.

The party started a campaign of public meetings in different wards of the city to arouse public opinion in its favour. After great hard work, however, the party secured only three seats influential opponents. The one important victory achieved by the party was Nagendranath Gupta beating Hasan Ali Afandi who was later nominated as an official member.

After the elections, Diwan Tahilram, Harchandrai and Nagendranath Gupta started taking great interest in municipal affairs. In the beginning, members belonging to the other group were not willing to cooperate with them but later, they began to listen to, and finally to cooperate, with them. Thus the municipality got a fresh lease of life. The party started to go from strength to strength and in 1896, Diwan Tahilram was appointed president, an office he held for nine years. The performance of the municipality improved tremendously. Tahilram died in 1905.

Seth Harchandrai became president in 1911. By selfless hard work, he turned Karachi from a village into a modern city during the 10 years of his presidency. In more ways than one, he can be called the father of modern Karachi.

His long experience as legal adviser to the municipality stood him in good stead as president because he knew everything there was to know about it. He knew what were its requirements and problems. Therefore, he turned out to be an outstanding president. The meetings of the municipality under his guidance used to be grand affairs.

In October 1910, the following became councillors:

Elected: Gidumal Lekhraj, Tirathdas Chandomal, Gidumal Fatehchand, Chotermal Tirahtdas, Kalloomal Phelumal, Cowasjee Khemji, Harchandrai Vishandas, Deepchand T. Ojha, Rahim Bakshio Fadu, Yusuf Ali, Ali Bhai Moolchand Korumal, Ghulam Husain Qasim, Nasir Lutf Ali, Abdur Rahim Saleh Mohammad, Pestunji

Kotwal, Hoshang N.E. Dinshaw, Lalchand Hasomal, Wadhmal Adharam, Lokamal Chelaram, Le-Raymond, T.G. Elphinstone and H.G. Mahan.

Nominated: H.C. Meeoles Jehangir Kothari, Alidina Ali Mohammad, Mir Ayub Khan, Jehangir Kothari, Alidina Ali Mohammad, Mir Ayub Khan, Capt. Hutchinson, Dr. S.G. Haji, Heeskeeth, G.H. Marsten, H. Spark, Shivram Dewonmal, H.D. Faqir and G. Strip.

Harchandrai knew it full well that if the municipality was to serve the people, it must have adequate financial resources. This, unfortunately, was not the case nor was there any likelihood of improvement in the immediate future. Nevertheless Harchandrai worked hard and eventually succeeded in creating better and permanent sources of income for the civic body.

Hitherto, goods which were brought into Sindh were liable to octroi. Out of these goods those exported to Britain were entitled to an octroi refund. There were several lacunae in this system. In the beginning, octroi was realised but it was never known how much. There was great scope for corruption, too.

In order to rationalise revenue collection, Harchandrai replaced octroi with a terminal tax which was a lower charge than the one it had replaced. All grain coming into Karachi was subject to the new tax and all refunds were withdrawn. Since the terminal tax was most reasonable, grain merchants started paying it willingly. Thus a complicated system of revenue collection was straightened out and led to a considerable increase in the municipality's income.

Other steps were also taken from time to time to generate more resources for the civic body with excellent results. Figures speak for themselves. When Harchandrai took over, the municipality had Rs. 2,219,159 and it was in debt to the tune of Rs. 1,098,000. After ten years when Harchandrai relinquished charge,

the municipality had Rs. 3,413,589 and its debts had increased only by Rs. 120,000. Moreover, its reserve fund had an extra Rs. 300,000.

In order to keep the municipal workers happy so that they could work with devotion and diligence, their genuine demands were accepted and their salaries were increased. The rules and terms and conditions of employment were rationalised and arrangements were made to hire competent and well-paid supervisory staff. All work depended on the chief officer whose salary was fixed at Rs. 1,400 and that of the health officer at Rs. 500.

Because of the First World War, the prices of essential goods had increased. To offset this, the municipal staff was given a dearness allowance. This had a salutary effect on the efficiency of the municipal workers.

Now Harchandrai turned his attention to improving the city. The congested areas of the Old Town, Machhi Miani and Ranchore Lines received priority. Narrow and ugly lanes were widened and straightened and the land required for the purpose was purchased from the owners for Rs. 931,159. Thus were these three localities developed. The new quarters were airy and bright. This improved the health of the people. The municipal limits were extended by incorporating the Garden Quarters and Rs. 9,000 were set aside for its improvement.

In those days, the Lyari river flowed through the city. Its water discharge was considerable and quite fast. When in flood, the Lyari river caused much damage to life and property and when it went down, it became a breeding place for mosquitoes which caused malaria. Harchandrai prepared a plan after consulting several engineers to divert the Lyari from the centre of the city. A bund was raised in Dhobi Ghat near the Gandhi Bagh and the river course was changed. The old river course in the city was filled up and a lot of valuable land was thus

made available. Its sale proceeds were considerable. The city became a much more open and a recurrent menace to the people was removed for good.

A new locality came up on the old Lyari river bed and there was great public demand that it should be named after Harchandrai who, however, refused and insisted that since Mr. Lee had been largely responsible for completing the project, the locality should be named after him. No-one could oppose Harchandrai and the new settlement was named Lee Quarters. This shows what a man of principles Harchandrai was.

Since Karachi's population was increasing by leaps and bounds, more land was needed. The land around the city belonged to the army. Harchandrai persuaded the government to move the army to an alternate site. Thus the Bunder Road Extension which is called Jamshed Quarters together with the artillery ground (4,102 acres in all) were included within the municipal limits. The army selected the Drigh Road site for itself.

It was decided that the Bunder Road Extension land should be colonised through cooperative housing societies on easy terms. Rules and regulations were drafted for the purpose. The credit for the Jamshed Quarters schemes goes entirely to Harchandrai. Rambagh Ratantalao and Ranchore Line's recreational places now considered the heart and lungs of the city were at the time dried up mud ponds. They were filled up and turned into beautiful public parks.

Since Harchandrai wanted to turn Karachi into a neat, clean and beautiful modern city, he undertook a tour of Europe to see for himself how the cities were planned there. He studied the municipal laws of these cities. He also visited Bombay and Calcutta. After these study tours, he got busy with development planning in Karachi.

Till then, the streets of Karachi were nothing more than dirt tracks where dust billowed up whenever a

vehicle drove through them. They were macadamised and the citizens of Karachi were saved from the hazards of a dust-laden atmosphere and the city became a lot cleaner. Footpaths were laid along important thoroughfares such as Bunder Road, McLeod Road, etc. Elphinstone Street which is now regarded as the best in the city, had no footpaths and its verges were uneven. The street was given a facelift during Harchandrai's presidency. Clifton Road, Lawrence Road and several other streets were widened. A new thoroughfare, the Manghopir Road was constructed. All this added to the beauty of the city.

Construction of the new municipality building on Bunder Road was also started during Harchandrai's tenure. But wages increased during World War I and work was suspended. Eventually, the building was inaugurated on January 7, 1932, by Jamshed Nausserwanji who was then president of the civic body. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the idea of having a new municipality was concerned by Seth Harchandrai who was a brilliant man and was deeply patriotic. Noted engineers around the world were consulted. Several plans were submitted out of which Harchandrai chose the best.

According to the 1911 census, Karachi had a population of 151,904 which rose to 216,883 in 1921. It became necessary to improve the quality and quantum of potable water for a growing population and to expand the sewerage system. History is witness to the fact that Harchandrai transformed Karachi during his ten-year tenure (1911-21) through several development plans which were executed with the greatest of financial circumspection and efficiency. The municipality spent Rs. 208,680 on development projects, the largest sum for a single year in the last decade. The city developed at extremely economic cost during Harchandrai's tenure because every penny was spent most judiciously.

In 1921, Harchandrai was elected to the Indian Legislative Council on a Sindh seat reserved for non-Muslims. This obliged him to remain in Delhi for long periods of time. Therefore, he resigned from the presidentship of the municipality voluntarily. The *Daily Gazette* which used to come out from Karachi in those days, paid rich tributes to Harchandrai for his services to the city. It said:

"We regret that Seth Harchandrai has resigned the most responsible and hard-working president of the Karachi municipality at a time when his services were needed most. The number of councillors has been increased this year and several new people have come in who have no experience of municipal work. A guide is direly needed under these conditions.

"Experience has shown that Seth Harchandrai has been an able and efficient president. He gave so much time to the municipality during the last ten years that his own law practice suffered but he did not care in the least. He performed his municipal duties truthfully and honestly and set a glorious example."

"He conducted the municipality's meetings with great aplomb and impartiality and gave the right lead to the councillors. There have been times when differences of opinion have arisen among councillors belonging to diverse parties. Instead of misusing his authority, Seth Harchandrai, through his mild-mannered and persuasive tactics, has often been able to resolve factional differences.

"The municipality will be luckily indeed if it gets a president who has Seth Harchandrai's qualities of head and heart."

The municipality's meeting held on April 20, 1921, was the last that Harchandrai attended. The meeting

adopted a resolution eulogising his great services to the city. Moving the resolution, Mr Cleton said:

"This is the last meeting Seth Harchandrai is attending as president. Through his priceless services he has bequeathed a grand tradition to us. He has been serving the municipality since 1887 and during ten years of presidency he



Services to Education

Harchandrai was brought up under the personal supervision of his highly capable father, Seth Vishandas and he learnt a great deal from him. Harchandrai's father was a fine and generous man. The son inherited these qualities.

Harchandrai spent seven years in Bombay to acquire higher education. The experience stood him in good stead and he learned to value the importance of education. He realised that only those nations were making progress whose the percentage of literacy was high. Nature had chosen Harchandrai to lead Sindh. The prosperity of the Parsi and Marhata communities in Bombay enkindled in him the desire to popularise education in Sindh so that it could embark on the road to progress.

In those days, different communities in the Old Town had their own makeshift schools. Harchandrai would go there and teach the children. he considered it a duty to encourage educational institutions. He got an opportunity to expand educational facilities when he became president of the Karachi municipality in 1911. A man of progressive ideas, he took up the cause of compulsory primary education. In those days the Karachi municipality was one of the few in India which took up the issue. The credit for this goes to Harchandrai.

In the Bombay Council, Mr. Gokhale had moved a bill providing for compulsory primary education. Harchandrai was foremost among those who supported the move wholeheartedly. Back in the Karachi municipality he had the following resolution passed:

"The Commissioner of Sindh has been apprised of the fact that the Karachi municipality is of the view that the introduction of compulsory primary education is of the utmost importance. The municipality accepts the basic principles of Mr. Gokhale's Compulsory education Bill and recommends that it should be accepted and rules and regulations be framed under it."

In 1918, when the first Bombay Act on primary education was promulgated, the Karachi municipality directed the school board to do the following.

Estimate the number of children in the 6-11 age group.

Estimate the expenditure on compulsory primary education.

Estimate how many buildings and teachers would be needed.

What monetary grant should be sought from the government

Facts collected by the school board revealed that 63% boys and 30% girls were already receiving primary education. During Harchandrai's 10-year tenure, the Karachi municipality kept on increasing its education budget gradually. In 1911, Rs 92,117 were spent under this head. By 1921, this allocation had increased to Rs. 217,444. The number of students increased from 2,410 to 4,312. Thus did the municipality serve the cause of education.

There were several associations belonging to different communities in the city which were engaged in educational activities. Harchandrai supported them to the hilt without consideration of caste or creed. These associations were given plots of land free of cost. The Sindh Madressah was given 6,000 and the Khoja Ismaili Council 3,000 yards of land. Other institutions which received free land included the Sanatan Dharam Mandal Kannyashala, the Dossa Kallian Bathshala, the Church

Mission School for Girls, the Lohana Wadya Actjeels Mandal and the Lohana industrial and Technical Institute. These plots of land put new life into these institutions and they began to work with renewed vigour and enthusiasm much to the benefit of the people.

The untiring efforts made by Diwan Dayaram Gidumal led to the creation of the Sindh College. Harchandrai became the right-hand man for Diwan Dayaram in fund-raising for the college. He was also a member of the standing committee of the college board for several years.

His abiding interest in education is proved by the fact that when pandit Madanmohan Malvia launched his fund raising campaign to raise the standard of the Benares (now Varanasi) Hindu University, Harchandrai lent him all out - out support. A lot of money was collected in Sindh because of the strenuous efforts made by Harchandrai who was made one of the vice-presidents of the University in recognition of his services.

Himself a voracious reader, Harchandrai promoted libraries and reading rooms in Karachi. He was a life member of the Khalikdino Library and Reading Room and the Hindu Town People's Association's lecture hall, library and reading hall in the Old Town. In short, Harchandrai was to be found everywhere and every time to promote education because he sincerely believed that national progress depended on the spread of literacy. To act on what one believes and then to achieve one's objectives is the hallmark of men of high thinking and integrity.



Social Service

Harchandrai had inherited the quality of dedication to social service from his father who had made a great name for himself in this field. When Karachi was hit by a plague epidemic in 1897, Seth Vishandas set up a hospital to fight the scourge. The hospital was managed by Seth Keshdas (a nephew of Seth Vishandas) and Seth Harchandrai.

Everyone dreaded going near a plague-smitten patient but Seth Harchandrai would tend to the stricken people fearlessly. He had nothing but great sympathy for the luckless. In this respect, Mahraj Rewachand Ratanchand's personal experience is unique. Once the chief officer of the Karachi municipality, he delivered a speech on a death anniversary of Harchandrai, in which he narrated the following incident.

"The plague had claimed two of my relatives brothers and I was myself afflicted and admitted to the Vishandas hospital. Harchandrai would visit the hospital and look after every patient. He came to my room and sat on my bed and started to say kind things in order to divert my attention from my miserable condition. This had such a wonderful effect on me that the hope which I had lost was born in my heart again and I started to improve. In those days I was a clerk in the municipality while Seth Harchandrai was a celebrated lawyer and municipal councillor".

During the plague, the army was on patrol duty in the city which added to the terror of an already terror-stricken populace. Seth Harchandrai organised a volunteer corps under his own leadership. This corps was meant to give courage to the people to fight the plague.

He would visit people's homes without considerations of personal safety. he would send the patients to the hospital and order his corps to take dead bodies for cremation or burial. He also made arrangements for giving financial help to those who needed it and provided protection to private property.

During world War I, Karachi was hit by a wave of influenza. Harchandrai was then president of the Karachi municipality. Several steps were taken to fight the disease. Mobile dispensaries were introduced to provide medical assistance to the patients in their homes.

In order to prevent the disease from spreading, it was necessary to stop people from congregating in large numbers as one place. The commissioner of Sindh empowered the president of the municipality to take such steps as he thought were necessary in this regard. Harchandrai ordered the closure of cinema houses and theaters for about a month. Some of the cinema and theater owners were his friends while he had good relations with the others. Therefore, he faced no opposition from any quarter.

Adulteration became a big problem in Karachi and pure food disappeared. Ghee, milk and other eatables, though available in plenty were all impure. To root out this evil, Harchandrai secured special rights for the municipality and had a laboratory established for testing food samples. This improved matters a lot.

He appointed special municipal staff to eliminate mosquitoes so that people should not fall victim to malaria. At the same time, he ensured a regular supply of quinine tablets.

He played a leading role in organising a conference on sanitation in 1917. The conference considered ways and means for improving sanitary conditions in the city. A publicity campaign was launched under which pamphlets were distributed among the people. Cinemas

and other means of mass communication were also used to educate the people on seasonal diseases and epidemics and preventive measures were also publicised.

The associations working for improving public health in Karachi were specially patronised by Harchandrai. When the Khoja Ismaili Council decided to set up a maternity home, he gave it 3,327 yards of land free of cost. He was constantly helping the Lady Dufferin Hospital and the Louis Lawrence Institute. He was for years a member of various committees of these organisations. He took keen interest in "Aethario" Association for the Welfare of the Poor and was its president for a year and was on its committee to the last.

The Karachi Health Association did a lot of work for women. It used to hire and train midwives so that they could attend expecting mothers in their homes. This organisation was a blessing for the poor and lower middle classes. Harchandrai did a great deal to get it going.

Harchandrai secured financial help from the municipality for the Gurodas Eye Hospital for providing treatment facilities for the common people.

He was one of the founders of the Karachi Club which became greatly popular with the educated and affluent families. Harchandrai was very fond of visiting the club and was twice elected its president. At the club, he used to regale members with his ready wit. He was the heart and soul of the club and was greatly sought after. He was also one of the founders of the Karachi Sindhi Gymkhana and was for some years its president. he also took keen interest in the establishment of the Hindu Gymkhana which he used to help from time to time. He was elected president of the Gymkhana Association. We have already seen how he converted the dried up mud ponds in Rambagh, Ratantalao into excellent public parks. Other parks were also laid and a special account was opened in the municipality for the maintenance of these recreational places. Special staff

was appointed to keep them green and clean. As a result, the Gandhi Bagh and the Burnes Park began to look better and better and became greatly popular with the people.

To sum up, Harchandrai took great interest in various fields of social welfare and several institutions came up under his guidance. Once he got interested in a project, he saw to it that it was completed successfully. His contribution to social welfare constitutes a glorious chapter in his great career.



As member, Legislative Council, Bombay

Legislative Councils came into being under the India Councils Act, 1861. Prior to this, there used to be the Governor-General's Executive Council in Delhi and the governor's executive councils in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

Under the new Act, the governor-general and governors were empowered to opt new members on their executive councils and to create legislative councils. When governors wanted to introduce new laws and regulations, they would invite nominated members to their executive councils to attend legislative council meetings for consultations. the Delhi Council was called the Imperial Legislative Council and regional councils were called the provincial legislative councils.

Reforms were introduced in the Councils Act in 1892 under which the councils were expanded and their powers increased. However, the practice of nominating members continued. Some people were nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council from 1862 to 1910. Between 1862 and 1892, Hassan Ali Afandi and Mr. Dayaram Jethmal, Advocate, both from Karachi, were nominated during different periods. From 1892 to 1910 Mir Allah Bux (Tando Muhammad Khan) and Dayaram Moolchand, Advocate (Karachi) were nominated.

The councils were further expanded under the Minto-Morley reforms in 1901. their membership was doubled. Most members were still nominated but some elected members were also allowed. this was the beginning of the electoral process in the councils.

These reforms allowed member to discuss the budgets and introduce resolutions on them. They were also allowed to move resolutions on the welfare of the people and speak on them. Members were also authorised to put questions and supplementary questions on national affairs.

Under the Minto-Morley reforms, the strength of the Bombay Legislative Council rose to 48 of whom four were ex-officio — three from the executive council and the advocate-general. Of the remaining 44, the governor was empowered to nominate 23 while the other 21 were elected

Of the 21 elected members, eight were to come from the municipal committees and four from the local boards groups, three each from the landlords and one each from the university of Bombay, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, the Mill-owners Association, the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Commercial Community.

From 1910, four members began to be elected to the Bombay Council, one each from the municipalities, local boards, landlords and one while member of the chamber of commerce from the municipalities Seth Harchandrai, Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari from the landlords, Syed Alahando Shah from the local boards and Montague Webb from the chamber of commerce were declared elected.

Seth Harchandrai got 30 votes while his rival, Lalchand Hassomal secured only nine. Since Harchandrai had lived in Bombay for seven years, some of the council members knew him. And since he used to attend the Indian National Congress meetings from 1888 onward, he was acquainted with several leaders some of whom were actually his friends. The council embarked upon a programme of social welfare and Harchandrai represented Sindh to the best of his ability.

Council election were held again in 1912 and Harchandrai was returned unopposed. From the Sindh local boards, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah (later Sir) was returned.

In the 1916 elections, Harchandrai was opposed by Diwan Bhoojsingh. It was a one-sided contest with Harchandrai winning 39-2. All other sitting members from Sindh retained their seats. In addition, Khan Bahadur Pir Bux Khan (Sukkur) and Tekchand Odhudas Advocate (Karachi) were nominated by the governor.

An opposition group emerged in the council led by Sir Pherozshah Mehta. Harchandrai was his right-hand man. Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari and Harchandrai were great friends and were often seen together. They had common views on several national issues.

Harchandrai was member of the Bombay Legislative Council from 1911 to 1920. During these years, some of the members were Sir Pherozshah Mehta; Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, Mr. Purbhashatsar Patnni, Kooposwani Mudaliar, Mr. R.P. Pranjpi, Mr. Sheeruf Devji Kamji. Sir Ibrahim Rehmatullah, Chunilal V. Mehta, Sardar Syed Ali, Mr. Srinivas — Mudaliar, J.K. Parekh, Syed Alahando Shah, Munmohan, Mohandas Ramji, Sheikh Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Mr. D.V. Beelvi.

Harchandrai would regularly take part in the budget debates and offer constructive proposals, amendments and corrections. His views were always treated with respect. Since he was a past master at facts and figure, he was elected member of the fiscal committee of the council in 1916 which was a tribute to his great intelligence and ability.

During his early speeches in the budgetary debates, he stressed that the Sindh budget should be presented separately so that members could know what was the state of affairs there. Sindh was backward as compared to

the other parts of Bombay. Harchandrai and his followers started to raise their voice for Sindh. Gradually, they began to be heard and several development projects were taken in hand in the areas which now constitute the Sindh province. In his capacity as a member of the finance committee, Harchandrai Played a pivotal role in this regard.

Questions concerning social welfare began to be raised and debated. Harchandrai played a leading role during these debates as a result of which select committees began to be appointed from time to time address specific issues. Harchandrai was a member of several of these committees where he worked diligently. The committees on which he was represented were:

1. The District Municipal (Amendment) Bill
2. The Patel Education Bill.
3. The Bombay and Karachi Rent Control Bill
4. The Municipal and District Boards (Corrupt Practices) Bill.
5. The Heirship Bill.

Harchandrai would study a subject deeply before speaking on it in the council. At the same time, he would discuss all issues with his colleagues and elicit their opinion. As a result, his speeches were weighty, well-argued and thought-provoking.

Some of the resolutions and questions about which he spoke in the council, are listed below:

The Primary Urdu Education resolution.

The Charties Registration Bill

The Depressed Classes Bill.

The Bombay Port Trust Bill.

The Land Revenue Bill

The Mohammedan Education Bill.

The Irrigation Bill.

The Sindh Coast Lights Bill.

The Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

The District Municipal Bill.

The Bombay Municipal Bill.

The Police Expenses (Inquiry) Bill.

The Aabkari Bill.

The Cotton Control Bill.

The Karachi Public Buildings Resolution. .

The Medical Registration Bill.

The village Panchayat Bill.

The Bombay Development Bill.

Harchandrai was deeply aware of the problems facing Sindh and he was always trying to solve them. He, together with Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari tried extremely hard to have the Sindh Commissioner's powers whittled down. They met the governor and members of the Bombay executive council and apprised them of their views on the subject. The Sindh Commissioner had excessive authority, it was officially argued because the region was backward. If his powers were reduced, it was further argued, a law and order situation might arise. However, increasing awareness among the people together with changing conditions made it imperative that rules and regulations should be amended. Harchandrai and Bhurgari were justified in making this demand.

Harchandrai moved heaven and earth to improve the lot of the farmers by improving the canal system so that agricultural production could increase. More land was brought under the plough and farm production went up. The traders also benefited. In fact, Harchandrai played a revolutionary role in the greening of Sindh.

Roads in Sindh were in a deplorable state. For economic progress, an effective network of roads was an essential prerequisite. In those days, the people of Sindh lived in isolated pockets and there was little or no socio-economic intercourse among them. And because of this, there was little political awareness in the people. Harchandrai was seized of the issue and exerted himself to the limit to improve the means of communications in

Sindh. He introduced a resolution on roads. His efforts bore fruit and new roads began to be constructed. A land survey was conducted for laying railway lines and work started on the project.

Ability was needed for putting questions and supplementaries in the council and Harchandrai had plenty of it. He would put questions in a manner as would force the government to do something about the issues raised by him. In this manner, he was able to have several problems facing the Sindhis resolved.

Police high-handedness was at its height and no-one had the courage to raise his voice against it except Harchandrai. However, if the police did good work, he was the first to appreciate it. He raised the issue of illegal use of arms by the police in Matiari in the council and demanded that an inquiry committee be set up to look into the matter. As a result, an inquiry commission headed by judicial commissioner E. Raymond with Harchandrai and Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari was set up. Harchandrai voiced his views freely. In its report, the commission recommended exemplary punishment for the guilty police officers and men. The commission's report was accepted by the government and the officers concerned were proceeded against.

Rasai, Cheer are Sindhi words which are used in interaction between an official and farmer or hari. To carry the officials' luggage, to work for a day or two on the landlord's farm had been the lot of the haris for years. High officials were expected to tour outlying areas to listen to people's problems and then try to solve them. In reality, however, these tours were dreaded by the people because the sahibs created more problems than they solved.

The sahib's breakfast, lunch and dinner were the landlord, tehsildar and patwari's responsibility who shifted it to the tillers of the soil. Any shortcoming brought the wrath of the three upon the poor haris.

Moreover, the sahib's staff extorted money from the people and made other illegal demands on them. The well-to-do could win reprieve by paying in cash or kind but the poor had to bear the brunt of the harsh demands of the bureaucracy.

Harchandrai and Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari protested against this high-handedness and exposed it. They persuaded the council to appoint a commission to look into public grievances against the bureaucracy. It was headed by Mr. Justice Howard and Harchandrai was made a member. Some information is available on this *rasai* (serving the sahibs) through the diary which Harchandrai kept. The commission started functioning on April 3, 1918. It met five times in three days in the kutchhery in Karachi. Witnesses were called and questioned.

After the commission was appointed, Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari made great efforts to help it. Jairamdas Daulatram, former governor of Assam, was his right-hand man in this respect. Both of them put in a tremendous effort to persuade people to agree to become witnesses and depose before the commission. The commission met in Sukkur, Hyderabad, Larkana and Karachi and heard witnesses.

In Sukkur, the commission started its work on April 15, 1918, and heard six witnesses. It met in the court of the district judge. Its meetings evoked great public interest and people watched its proceedings in large numbers.

Among the witnesses, the then collector of Sukkur, Mr. Rothfield spoke strongly against *rasai*. The deputy commissioner of Jacobabad, however, refused to depose but the Rohri deputy collector, Mr. Isani did.

After Sukkur, the commission met in Larkana on April 22-25 and the collector Mr. Baloos spoke vigorously against bureaucratic excesses. However, the deputy superintendent of police and the officer incharge of the

PWD refused to appear before the commission. Other witnesses were heard in Larkana, the most famous among them being Wadhomal, tehsildar, whose forthright denunciation of *rasai* made him greatly popular. He came armed with facts and figures on bureaucratic excesses and malpractices. Other tehsildars and patwaris also eased their consciences by laying everything bare before the commission. In short, the evidence secured by the commission from Larkana was far weightier than the one collected from Sukkur.

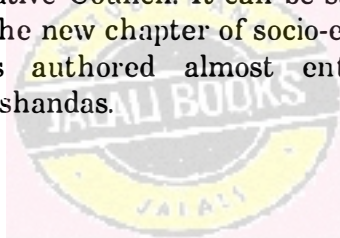
The commission then met in Hyderabad on May 1 - 6. When a sub-inspector of police exposed his department's high-handedness, the commission chairman expressed his displeasure which angered the people. On the second day, too, the chairman's attitude during deputy collector Jagatsingh's deposition was no better which created great resentment among the people. Harchandrai was obliged to ask the chairman to improve his behaviour. This had a salutary effect. During the fifth meeting of the commission in Hyderabad, better hearings were possible when Mr. Chaenrai and Mr. Wasteeram deposed. Later, some landlords made some interesting depositions. Many things came to light when the Honourable Alahando Shah and Mr. Khushaldas gave their evidence. The former spoke the truth courageously and exposed the cruelties with which the bureaucracy was suppressing and exploiting the people. Mr. Khushaldas Samtani who was a PWD engineer, laid bare the misdeeds of the executive engineers and gave examples to show to what extent graft had spread in his department. He charged that the chief engineers themselves were involved in corruption.

The commission then returned to Karachi and heard the DSP and assistant commissioner. The following day, Mr. Heaskeeth, registrar Bhawandas, Nabi Bux and Jhamatrai, tehsildar, deposed. On the third day, Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari gave his evidence during

which much acrimony was seen between the commission chairman and the witness who could not complete his testimony and it went into the next day. This ended the commission's task of examining witnesses.

After the commission had presented its report to the government, the latter ordered the bureaucracy to stop repressing and exploiting the people. This had the desired effect and things began to improve. *Rasai*, and *Cheer* did not come to an end altogether but their frequency was reduced to an appreciable extend. Two factors were responsible for the oppressive system — an irresponsible bureaucracy and the slavish mentality of the people.

This is but a brief account of how Harchandrai served his people during his ten-year membership of the Bombay Legislative Council. It can be said without fear of denial that the new chapter of socio-economic growth in Sindh was authored almost entirely by Seth Harchandrai Vishandas.



In the Indian Legislative Assembly

Under the 1861 Council Act, the governor-general could nominate only 12 members to the Imperial Council. These six used to be official members and the other six were non-official. Members had a two-year tenure. In 1892, the Imperial Council was reconstituted and given greater powers than it had enjoyed hitherto. The council's membership was increased from 12 to 16. Members were still nominated but some of them could now be recommended by institutions and associations. This could be said to be the beginning of public representation on the council. The number of official members remained six but non-official strength was raised to 10. The council was now authorised to discuss the budget and raise questions on the socio-economic well-being of the people.

Further improvements were effected in the council under the 1909 Minto-Morley reforms. To the governor-general's executive committee, the council was to have 60 members of which 35 were to be nominated by the governor-general and 25 were to be elected from specified constituencies. Members' tenure was increased to three years.

The Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 had no effect on the functioning of the government of India or its administrative structure. However, legislative changes were made. The Imperial Legislative Council was replaced by two bodies, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. The former was to have 140 members of whom 100 were to be elected and the other

40 were to be nominated. Of the 40 nominated members, 26 were to come from the bureaucracy. The assembly was to have three-year terms. The Council of State was to be a 60-member body with 33 being elected and 27 nominated by the governor-general.

After the 1919 reforms, Sindh had four members in the Indian Legislative Assembly and one in the Council of State. The following were elected in 1920:

1. Seth Harchandrai — non-Mohammedan (Rural)
2. Ali Bux Muhammad Hussain — Muhammadan (Rural)
3. Wali Muhammad Hussain Ali—Muhammadan (Rural)
4. Sahebsingh Chandasingh—Land-holders.

Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari was returned to the Council of State.

Elections were held again in 1923 and 1926. In the 1926 elections, the following were returned to the Indian Legislative Assembly from Sindh:

1. Seth Harchandrai Vishandas — Non-Muhammadan (Rural)
2. Seth Abdullah Haroon — Muhammadan (Rural)
3. Wadero Muhammad Panah Ghulam Qadir Khan — Muhammadan (Rural).
4. Wadero Wahid Bux Ilahi Bux Bhutto — (Land-holders).

Among the noted members elected to the 1926 assembly were the following:

Pandit Madanmohan Malvia
 Pandit Motilal Nehru
 Srinivasa Ayngar
 T. Prakasham
 V.V. Jogia

- 1 Mr. Sankham Cheeti
 A. Rangaswamy
 G. Saruttamrai
 M. R. Jatkar

Jamnadas Mehta
 Harchandrai Vishandas
 Vithalbhai Patel
 Fazal Ibrahim Rehmatullah
 N.C Kelkar
 Muhammad Ali Jinnah
 Seth Haji Abdullah Haroon
 Sir Prashotamdas Thakurdas
 Tulsichander Goswamy
 K.C. Lhogi
 S.C. Matra
 Dr. A. Suharawardi
 A.H. Ghaznavi
 Pandit Hirdyanath Kunzro
 Ghanshamdas Birla
 T.A. Sherwani
 Muhammad Ismail Khan
 Mr. Kidwai
 Lala Lajpatrai
 Mian Muhammad Shah Nawaz
 Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan
 Sardar Kartarsingh
 Dr. B.S. Munji
 Pandit Thakurdas
 Maulvi Muhammad Shafi
 Dr. Harisingh Gaur
 Dwarkaparsad Misra
 Rai Saheb Harbilas Sharda

After the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, the Hindus of Sindh were able to elect a representative to the Indian Legislative Assembly and Harchandrai was successful in the first elections in 1920. He was a member till his death on February 16, 1928. He always stood as an independent candidate because he believed that since Sindh was extremely backward, its problems should be tackled from a non-partisan platform. He won

every election he fought which is proof his immense popularity, ability and integrity.

In the 1920 elections, he was returned unopposed as his rival, Lalchand Hassimal's nomination papers were rejected. In 1923, he defeated the Congress Sawraj Party's candidate, Purbhdas Tolani, an advocate from Larkana by a huge margin. In 1926, he defeated the same party's candidate, Tikamdas Wadhmal, a Karachi barrister, by 2,000 votes. Around 60,000 votes were cast and Harchandrai secured a majority in every district.

His victories against the Sawraj Party show the extent to which the people loved him and appreciated his great courage and selfless devotion to the cause of Sindh. His vote was always cast for the right cause. Whenever national interests were clashed with imperial interests he would be up in arms against the government. He could often reject government plans if he thought they were lop-sided. He had full faith in the parliamentary system and believed that the opposition had an important role to play in running the affairs of state. He was the first to oppose the government whenever it did something against the interests of the people or when he thought it was straying from political propriety. A few examples are given here:

The government imposed the salt tax which was an act of cruelty against the poor. This act sent a wave of anger through the assembly and an agitation was launched against the government. Harchandrai was in the vanguard of the struggle against this repressive measure. After a heated debate, the assembly voted against the imposition of the salt tax. But the viceroy vetoed the rejection of the tax by the assembly. This draconian act by the viceroy angered the members and they decided to resist it.

The assembly had to approve several grants needed by the government. The slogan was raised in the House: No money without redressal of public grievances. It was

made clear that this course of action had been adopted in protest against the viceroy's unconstitutional behaviour. The members who showed exemplary courage on the salt tax issue and voted against the grants numbered 17. Harchandrai Vishandas was one of them.

However, the situation turned into one of confrontation between the government and the members who were opposed to the salt tax. In protest against the government's obduracy, the 17 members including Harchandrai resigned. But such was the confidence his electorate has in him that he was re-elected unopposed.

Many Indians lived in Britain's African colonies. The British attitude against its black subjects was reprehensible. The Indians living in Kenya were treated with contempt and subjected to various oppressive measures. This sent a wave of protest across India and the issue was raised in the assembly. A struggle was launched to secure equal rights for the Indians living in other British colonies. As always, Harchandrai was in the forefront of this struggle.

Although he had always fought elections as an independent candidate, Harchandrai joined the National Party in January, 1926. On August 25, 1925, the president of the Legislative Assembly was to be elected. Vithalbhai Patel was the Congress Swaraj Party candidate. The bureaucracy was trying its utmost to prevent Patel from getting elected. Great tension ensued and there came a stage where some members decided to stay away from the election. Harchandrai campaigned vigorously for Patel and despite the bureaucracy's best efforts, he won by two votes.

Harchandrai stood for immediate independence for India whose government should be accountable to the people. He also desired a status of equality for India in the comity of nations. He wanted the induction of Indians in top positions in all departments including the

armed forces. He strongly believed that legislative bodies should acquire such authority as would enable the Indians to accede to power automatically. So long as the British held key positions in the civil and military bureaucracy, India could never attain independence. He was of the view that India would save a lot of money if the British were removed from top jobs because their salaries and perks were very high. Moreover, the money would remain in India if the British officials were replaced. He did not entirely agree with the argument that such a replacement would affect the economy adversely. A setback, if any, would be temporary, he argued. Anyway, losses were an essential concomitant of change.

Harchandrai stood for Hindu-Muslim unity which, he said, was essential for India to attain independence. Without such unity, independence would remain a mirage. Efforts must be continuously made, therefore, to bring all communities closer together. He regretted the clashes between members belonging to different communities in the assemblies. The differences had harmed the national cause. He thought that legislators should inter-mingle with each other regularly and have mutual discussions on all problems facing the nation in order to arrive at a consensus on the basis of which they should function in the assemblies. These, in short, were the political beliefs of Seth Harchandrai. He was a leader of whom the people of India in general and the people of Sindh in particular could justly be proud.

Britain had announced that the Montague – Chelmsford reforms would be followed by another package after 10 years. Demands for independence began to be made in every part of India and the call was made for greater powers for the assembly and the councils. A resolution was passed in this regard which was fully backed by Harchandrai.

In 1923, British Prime Minister Montague resigned and power changed hands. Montague's successors adopted tough attitude vis-a-vis India and the little ray of hope for a better deal for the country was extinguished. The new British government rejected the resolution passed by the Indian legislative assembly and reiterated that there would be no further reforms for 10 years. This changed the situation altogether and the viceroy began to use his powers arbitrarily. Differences grew between the official and non-official members of the assembly which were exploited by the government at every step. Nationwide resentment grew. However, throughout this tense period Harchandrai conducted himself with great dignity. He would take part in the debates in the House with great enthusiasm and try to bring others round to his way of thinking through well-reasoned arguments. Apart from his budget speeches, he espoused all causes dear to the people of India. He debunked the bureaucracy, he demanded the release of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. He made repeated pleas for Mr. Horniman's return to India. He pleaded for amendments in the civil and criminal codes of procedure and the withdrawal of excise duty on cotton. He was a paragon of patriotism and his legislative career was memorable.

Seth Harchandrai kept the problems of Sindh uppermost in his mind and tried his best to solve them. During the budget debates, during Question Hour, outside the assembly as inside it, he strove for a better deal for Sindh.

He had a great deal to do with the implementation of the Sukkur Barrage scheme work on which had been stopped by the Bombay government on the plea that it was short of funds. Harchandrai, in consultation with other Sindhi legislators A.L. Brice, Khan Bahadur Wali Muhammad Hassan Ali and principal Shahani, decided that efforts should be made to persuade the Bombay

government to resume work on the barrage during the assembly session.

Sindhi representatives succeeded in winning the revenue minister's sympathies largely through the efforts made by Mr. Brice. It was decided to move such a resolution in the assembly as would not be stalled by legal hair-splitting. This was done on September 23, 1921. It asked the governor-general-in-council to release such funds as were necessary to construct the Sukkur Barrage without delay.

All four representative from Sindh spoke in favour of the resolution and drew the assembly's attention to a pressing need of their region. The discussion had some effect on the circles concerned. Attempts continued to be made until the Bombay council passed a resolution on the Sukkur Barrage in 1923. The barrage was completed subsequently and it changed the face and fortunes of sindh.

At Seth Harchandrai's death, a condolence meeting was held in the Khaliqdino Hall in Karachi. It was presided over by the commissioner of Sindh, Mr. W.F.. Hudson. In his presidential remarks, he said that Harchandrai was a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly for eight years. He said he knew more about him and his performance than those present at the meeting because he has worked with him both during the first as well as the second assemblies and had attended sessions in Delhi and Simla. He said he had just returned after attending a session of the third assembly where every member was shocked at Harchandrai's death. He was a fine speaker and extremely popular with other members of the House.

Continuing, Mr. Hudson said that Harchandrai's speeches were always full of facts, weighty and convincing. His sense of humour had endeared him to everyone. He never spoke on a subject without first

studying it. His speeches were so effective that every member was forced to pay his full attention to him.

The seating arrangement in the House was on party basis. All of them agreed, however, give Harchandrai a front row seat. This honour was his till the last. Harchandrai was a great gentleman of unimpeachable integrity.

He would express his own views without in any manner offending anyone else. He never forget that there were two sides to a coin. So far as he could remember, he had never took umbrage at anyone holding views contrary to his own, Mr. Hudson said.

In the recent past, there had been incidents of communal violence in Delhi and Harchandrai's own beloved Sindh which had saddened him greatly because he was himself so mild-mannered and kind-hearted. Mr. Hudson used to meet Harchandrai to exchange views on communal violence which was born of traditional suspicions and misunderstandings and obduracy. A man as gentle and as peaceful as Harchandrai could never understand how man could hurt man. He hated violence and did his best to bring about peace and amity among different communities. Those who considered themselves Harchandrai's friends and shared his views should follow the glorious example set by him, Mr. Hudson said. "There can be no greater memorial to Harchandrai than emulating him. No other memorial would then be needed. We have lost an old friend. We'll not be able to see him or hear him in the assemblies. It is a fact that no one is free of ego but Harchandrai was completely untainted. I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that the vacuum created by his death will difficult to fill," Mr. Hudson concluded.

A Man of Principles

Harchandrai's success lay in his steadfast refusal to compromise on principles which he held dear. He did not prefer mundane considerations to his beliefs. The test of a man's commitment to principles comes when he is faced with difficult circumstances. People committed to their principles overcome all difficulties with the courage of their convictions. For them adversity is a baptism of fire. Men without principles resign themselves to the circumstances. One of the best examples from Harchandrai's career is as follows:

"Mr. Pania was for some years editor of the *Sindh Observer*. He used to write a column, 'Shot and Shell' under the pen name of Vinod. Writing on March 3, 1928, he recalled that in the 1926 elections, to the Indian Legislative Council, Harchandrai was an independent candidate. Opposing him was a Congress nominee. Mr. Pania was at the time a member of the Sindh Congress Committee.

Wrote Mr. Pania: "I keep recalling the incident even after Seth Harchandrai's death. In fact, I began to respect him after this incident. It was a hot summer's day and we had gone to Hyderabad for a short visit for a Congress committee meeting which was to choose the party candidate for the forthcoming elections. Everyone in the committee knew that it would be very difficult to wrest the seat from Harchandrai who was extremely popular in the electorate.

"During the meeting, a member proposed that efforts should be made to persuade Harchandrai to join the Congress. he would be returned unopposed and the

party would save thousands of rupees on the electioneering campaign.

"It was decided to form a committee to call on Harchandrai who was at the time in Hyderabad. The committee met in the office of Mr. Sanatdas, advocate. Harchandrai gave a patient hearing to the committee but said he would like to see the affidavit he was expected to sign for party membership. This was duly done. He read the document, took off his glasses, put them on the table and said: 'You want an answer here and now? I refuse to become a member of your party because I do not want to bind myself after signing this paper because if I do so, I will not be able to stand by my principles as a member of the assembly I will be obliged to obey all Congress orders like a puppet. This is against my conscience. Do as you please but I think that I will be as good a Congressite as I have hitherto been without signing this affidavit.'

"I asked him why was he not willing to sign a blank cheque. He said it was just like that. I told him that on the basis of principles, his stance was worthy of respect but even an ordinary man could have saved himself thousands of rupees in election expenses by signing the affidavit."

"He smiled and said he knew a 'Sir Sahib' who got elected on many parties tickets but never acted on the programmes of any one of them. he was not that type."

Came election time and Harchandrai found himself pitted against Tikamdas Wadhomal of the Congress. At the age of 65, he had to visit all parts of a huge constituency from Jacobabad to Hyderabad. He went to every village and town. When the results came, Harchandrai won handsomely but he won it the hard way, sparing neither time nor energy more yet money. Thus did he raise his own stature.

Relations with the Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 by Mr. Allan Octavian Hume. He was the son of the noted parliamentarian, Jospeh Hume. He joined the Indian Civil Service and retired as home secretary to the government of India in 1883. Lord Lytton was the viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880. He had made himself greatly unpopular because of his policies and a demand began gradually to be made for the institution of a national party. Regional parties had come up which were working for limited objectives. Correspondence began among these parties and the idea for a permanent national party gained strength.

After retirement, Hume decided to devote his time for the economic uplift and independence for the Indians. With these objectives in view, he corresponded with the leaders of the existing parties. Consequently, it was decided to hold a conference in Poona which was then a major political centre. However, a cholera epidemic in the city obliged the organisers to change the venue to Bombay. The conference was held under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association whose Honourary Secretaries were Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. K. T. Tulang and Mr. Dinshaw Edulji Wacha. The conference decide to name the proposed party the Indian National Congress. The Bombay conference was attended by 72 delegates from all over India. The Sindh Sabha sent two delegates, Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and Dhan Addharam Moolchand. Seth Vishandas

Nehalchand also watched the proceedings. Later, two Congress meetings were held in Calcutta and Madras.

The fourth meeting of the Congress was held in Allahbad in 1880. It was attended by Seth Harchandrai who made his maiden speech. He was then 26. From then on to 1918, he attended every Congress meeting. For 30 years he remained a Congress leader from Sindh and it would not be far wrong to say that the Congress was Sindh and for Sindh, Congress was Seth Harchandrai.

In order to improve the working of the party in Sindh, Hume wrote some letters to Harchandrai in 1888. Two of these have been included in Diwan Dayaram Gidumal's book, *The Life of Sadho Hiranand*. These letters call upon Harchandrai, Diwan Tahilram Khemchand and Hiranand Khem Singh to improve the working of the Indian National Congress in a backward area like Sindh. It only goes to prove that these young men were worthy of the trust reposed in them.

Till the end of the XIX century, political awareness had not come to Sindh. Nevertheless Sindh was represented by two delegates at the inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Sindhi representatives continued to attend Congress meetings but no session was held in Sindh itself because of financial constraints. Sindh was a small province with a population lower than that of the Maimonsingh district in Bengal. Nor did the province had affluent landlords like the other provinces. Eighty per cent of the population of Sindh was Muslim who were not interested in the Congress. Some rich Hindu landlords were there, of course, but they were not interested in national affairs. Sindh did not have prosperous lawyers like Bombay. Because of these reasons Sindhi Congress leaders did not have the courage to organise a party conference.

Diwan Tahilram Khemchand wanted to organise the annual Congress in Sindh but could not do so for lack of resources. In 1907, Congress workers gathered at a camp before the start of the annual conference in Surat. They decided that the party should be invited to hold its next conference in Karachi. However, there was a great uproar in the Surat meeting and some unsavoury incidents took place as a result of which Sindhi Congress leaders could not muster enough courage to extend the invitation. The party was invited to meet in Karachi in 1911 but Sindh had to withdraw in favour of Bihar.

Sindh again extended the invitation during the Bankipore conference in 1912 through Harchandrai, seconded by Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari who was also a delegate. The invitation was accepted and it was resolved that the 28th annual session of the Indian National Congress should be held in Karachi. Hasaram Vishandas Tharwani, advocate, was a keen observer of national affairs and used to attend Congress meetings regularly. He gave a brilliant account of the Karachi conference and other meetings in the prestigious Calcutta monthly magazine, *Modern Review* in two separate articles covering the 30-year-old political history of Sindh. Excerpts are being reproduced here:

"It was decided at the Bankipore session to hold the 28th session in Karachi at Seth Harchandrai's invitation. There were great difficulties in giving practical shape to the idea and it can be said that the session was one of the greatest feats of Harchandrai's career. Only he made the session possible. Otherwise, it would have remained a dream. When preparations were taken in hand, many unforeseen hurdles had to be crossed.

"The British-owned paper, *The Sindh Gazette* was the greatest of these hurdles. It did not like the idea that the Sindhi Muslims should join the Congress. Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari's appearance at the Bankipore session as a delegate from Sindh had and his seconding

the Harchandrai invitation for a Congress session in Karachi had rankled the *Gazette* and it crossed all limits of professional propriety. It wrote that these developments were enough to shake Asia, Europe and Africa. *The Sindh Gazette* ran a year-long propaganda the main thrust of which was to keep Sindhi Muslims away from the Congress.

Financial problems were no less difficult. It was futile to expect anything from the Parsi community in Karachi because it was not interested in national affairs. Generally, too, the country was passing through an extremely quiet period and Sindh was equally affected. Here, nature helped him. In the old town, lived Seth Aeesardas Asanmal, a rich Sindhi-Punjabi trader. He donated Rs. 5,000 for the Congress session under Harchandrai's influence. This initial donation eased the situation and more than Rs. 28,000 were collected. Ticket sales to delegates and visitors raised another Rs. 11,000.

The great leader of Sindhi Muslims, Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari lent full support to Harchandrai as did Ghulam Ali Chagla, Ghulam Hussain Qasim and Ayub Khan. Chagla even became one of the secretaries of the reception committee and rendered great service to the Congress. Sindhi Muslims not only participated in the Congress session, they also lent full support in organising the show. Sindhi Muslims in fact proved that they were not behind their co-religionists in other parts of India. Muslims attended the Karachi session in large numbers as delegates and visitors. This was a new chapter in the history of the Congress. All credit for this goes to Seth Harchandrai.

Delegates who attended the session numbered 125 whereas more than 500 Sindhi delegates made up for the small number of who came from the rest of India. In the beginning of the report on the 28th Congress session, the party general secretary Mr. Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha

said that it would be unfair not to acknowledge the manner in which the conference had been organised and the spirit with which the organisers had worked. Most of these people were new to the job but some of them had experience of how previous sessions were held. Adequate resources and great devotion made the Karachi session a grand success. He regretted that the Congress sessions elsewhere had not been held in a satisfactory manner and that the number of delegates was falling even from places where these sessions were held. It was all quiet in the country but it was a matter of great satisfaction that this was not the case in Karachi. Everything had been done to make the session a resounding success in spite of the fact that the organisers had no experience of holding big functions. The Congress general secretary said no praise would be look high for the efficiency, dedication and application of the organisers. The division of labour was excellent and right men had been chosen for the right jobs and their sense of responsibility was exemplary. Every sub-committee had been given specific tasks to perform and the session was held without a hitch anywhere.

The volunteers were traders and businessmen who served the guests extremely well. Delegates who came by rail were welcomed and seen off in a proper and pleasing manner. The Congress president was given a grand reception and the procession was to be seen to be believed. Thousands of Karachites witnessed the magnificent show. It was a scene they would remember with pride. The show had great impact and the Congress came to be recognised as a national party which could solve their problems.

The general secretary said it was a matter of pride that 500 delegates had attended from Sindh. their number was higher than that of those coming from other areas. The Congress session was not only well-attended, it was also an unqualified success.

The reception committee for the session was 201-strong and the welcome committee comprised the following:

Seth Harchandrai Vishandas: Chairman.

Rai Bahadur Hiranand Khemsingh and Mr. Ghulam Ali Chagla: general secretaries.

Lokamal Chelaram, Kallumal Pehlumal, Jhamandas Valabhdas and Durgadas B Advani: Secretaries; Deepchand T. Ojha and Shivaram Dewonmal: treasures; Lala Motolal: leader of the volunteer corps.

Nawab Syed Muhammad was unanimously elected president of the Karachi conference of the Congress. it was the party tradition that the president had to come from the host city. Since the Muslims were in majority in Sindh, it was decided that the conference president should be a Muslim. This was the best way to attract the Muslims to the party. That is why Syed Muhammad's name was sagaciously proposed. Delegates from other parts of India also agreed to the proposal. His name had been under consideration even when Sindhi leaders decided to invite the Congress to hold its conference in Karachi during the Surat session.

Syed Muhammad was the third Muslim to become Congress president. Before him had come Badruddin Tayyabji in Madras in 1887 and M.R. Sayani in Calcutta in 1896. Syed Muhammad was a descendant of Tipu Sultan. He was a great nationalist and was a man of independent views. He joined the Congress during its 1887 session at a time when Muslims showed little interest in national politics. For him to join the Congress was an act of great personal courage. He was the chairman of the welcome committee for the Congress conference in Madras in 1903. He was also a member of the imperial legislative council.

Among the important leaders who attended the Karachi conference were D.A. Wacha, Bhopindrnath Basu, D.A. Khari, Gokuldas K. Parekh, Binkuntnath Sen,

T.C. Shishagri Ayer, N.M. Samruth, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Agha Khan, Lala Lajpatrai, Ganga Parsad Varma, Lalloobhai Sawaldas and others.

Prominent among those who could not attend for reasons of health were Pherozshah Mehta, Surrendranath Bannerji, Gokhale and Pandit Madanmohan Malviya. Their absence created the impression that the conference would not be successful but this was not the case.

The Sindhi leaders who spoke on various resolutions in the conference were Hiranand Khemsingh, Thakurdas Khemchand, Mithradas Ramchand, Gopaldas, Jhamatmal, Lalchand Navalrai, Mir Ayub Khan, Barrister Abdur Rahman, Hafiz and Kishanchand Jhamrai.

In his capacity as chairman of the welcome committee, Harchandrai made a great speech at the conference. Mr. Vacha, general secretary of the Congress made the following observations on this historic speech:

"Seth Harchandrai is a veteran Congress leader. Each word of the speech he has made has been meaningful. He has welcomed delegates from outside Sindh with great affection. He spoke on Karachi's expansion and increasing importance. He raised some important issues whose resolution is essential for the promotional of national interest.

"So well-reasoned was his advocacy of the problems facing Sindh that every delegate heard him with great attention. Thus did Mr. Harchandrai made other leaders and the Press to think about their problems."

"In 1931 another Congress session was held in Karachi. It was the party's 45th annual meeting. The Congress camp set up in Karachi was named Harchandrai Nagar to honour the great leader. The chairman of the welcome committee, Dr. Choith Ram Gidwani had this to say about Harchandrai:

"It was 18 years ago that the first Congress conference was held in Karachi. Seth Harchandrai was the moving spirit behind it. It is a matter of great pride for us that in the latest battle, Harchandrai became the first martyr. This battle was joined when the nation rejected the Simon Commission. Throwing medical advice aside, he died while voting against the commission. Today, the camp we have set up for you has been named Harchandrai Nagar to pay tribute to his memory."



Role in the Social Life of Sindh

Sindh had fallen way behind the rest of India in the field of social welfare. During the Kalhora and Talpur periods vast parts of Sindh were inhabited by Muslims who were divided into Syeds, Pirs, Mirs and waderas on the one hand and poor peasants and workers on the other. The former were interested in no-one but themselves while the latter lived lives of unrelieved misery. They were so enslaved by the Syeds, the pirs, the Mirs and waderas that their lot had become pitiable. Among the Hindus some were farmers while the others were government servants, businessman and small shopkeepers. All these people were confined to their own limited circles and were interested at best in promoting family rather than national interests. Until 1880, no-one had any idea about the concept of social welfare.

The British rule over Sindh began in 1843. Hyderabad remained the capital for one year and then was shifted to Karachi. Education began to be imparted in English. In 1846, the Church Mission Society set up an English-medium school in Karachi. The main function of the society's priests was to propagate Christianity. However, it cannot be denied that the missionaries did considerable social welfare work. This began to have an impact on other people who started to think that one purpose of life was to serve others.

Public awareness about social welfare began to increase but things were at an elementary stage. The government set up high schools in Karachi and Hyderabad in 1856 and the knowledge of the English

language began to transform the young people's thinking.

Sindh had its schools but the examination centre for the matriculation examination remained Bombay and to go there was not the easiest of things. Therefore, young boys looked for jobs if they could not afford to go to Bombay. In 1878, an examination centre was established in Karachi and a trip to Bombay became unnecessary. There being no institution for higher learning in Sindh except for the sons of the rich families, these were only 15 or 16 graduates till the Sindh Arts College was established in 1887.

In those parts of India where the British had established their rule before Sindh, English language education had spread rapidly and, therefore, there was greater political awareness in the literate classes there. Exposure to liberal, democratic ideas had emancipated them and they were beginning to think in terms of improving the socio-economic conditions of the people. Several association had sprung up where useful work was being done.

In Bombay, efforts had already been taken in hand to transform Hindu society. These efforts were fruitful and led to a general desire for economic uplift. Among the important leaders of this era were Talang, Ranade and Bhandarkar. Mr. Behramji Malabari, too, was a prominent personality respected for his social services. In Poona (now Pune), the Poona Sarojnik Association was doing great social work. The work being done by these people could not but impress the few Sindhi young people studying in Bombay. Among the noted Sindhi young men who were in college in Bombay were:

Chuharmal Kundanmal Punjabi, Aloomal Tikamdas Bhojwani, Mirza Sadiq Ali Faridoon Beg, Mirza Qaleech Beg, Tekchand Odhudas Waswani, Dayaram Gidumal Shahani, Harchandrai Vishandas, Tahilram Khemchand Wazirani Hiranand Khemsingh Advani, Mithradas

Jwahiri, Himmatsingh Gajsingh Advani, Preetamdas Parsumal Chandnani and Tarachand Jairamdas Wadhwani.

In Bengal, the social work done by Raja Rammohanrai had its impact on Sindh. It was under his leadership that the Brahmu Samaj was instituted. Shri Keshabchandra Sen was an important founding father of the Brahmu Samaj and the struggle launched by it to introduce religious and social reforms. The result was that Bengali Hindus, instead of converting to Islam reverted to a study of their own religion. Soon, a countless number of young Hindus started to follow the principles enunciated by Keshabchandra Sen and became agents of social change. In Hyderabad, Sindh, Diwan Noolrai Shooqiram Advani, impressed by the Brahmu Samaj's performance, did considerable work in the field of social reform.

Social work started in 1880 when Bombay-educated young men started to return to Sindh. Noted among them was Diwan Dayaram Gidumal Shahani. He was a clerk but rose to be an advocate by dint of sheer hard work and made a great name for himself. He was foremost among the social reformers of his time and among his prominent contemporaries were:

Diwan Dayaram Jethmal, Diwan Noolrai Shooqiram Advani, Diwan Hiranand Shooqiram Advani, Diwan Kodumal Chandanmal Khilnani, Nagendranath Gupta, Diwan Khemchand Tahilram Wazirani, Prof. B.G Padshah and Harchandrai Vishandas.

In 1882, the Sindh Sabha was established which was open to all communities. Its objective was to try and solve the problems facing the Sindhis. Specially researched articles on these problems were read at the Sabha meetings and letters were written to various government departments about administrative shortcomings. The leading lights of the Sabha were:

Diwan Dayaram Jethmal, Diwan Dayaram Gidumal Shahani. The former was an eminent leader and the latter a senior bureaucrat. In those days, public servants were not barred from taking interest in social work. Even so, Shahani kept himself in the background despite doing tremendous work for the Sabha.

The Sindh Sabha used to bring out two newspapers, *The Sindh Times* and *Sindh Sudhar*. Diwan Hiranand Shoaqiram Advani (Sadhu Hiranand) was their first editor. After a while, the noted Bengali writer Negandranath Gupta also joined him. In this respect, too, Diwan Dayaram Gidumal provided excellent guidance. Diwan Kaudumal Chandanmal, Diwan Tahilram Khemchand and Seth Harchandrai used to contribute regularly to these papers and provided other assistance. The following information about the Sindh Sabha is available in Dayaram Gidumal Shahani's book on Sadhu Hiranand:

In 1887, the following members of the Sindh Sabha Committee wrote a letter to the governor of Bombay:

Adharam Moolchand, Jamshedji Nadir, Fatehchand Atmaram, Sharif Saleh Muhammad, A. Cook, Edulji Dinshaw, M.M. Mirzban, Nagendranath Gupta, Sehejram Gangadhar and Daulatram Jethmal (Secretary).

Dayaram Jethmal died in August, 1887. He was succeeded by his friend Adharam Moolchand as the Sindh Sabha leader. These are the two gentlemen who represented Sindh in the inaugural conference of the All India National Congress. They were also members of the Bombay Legislative Council.

In all provinces of India, demands were being made for socio-economic development and organisations were being set up to work for the acceptance of these demands. The government quickly saw which way the wind was blowing. Sectarianism began to raise its head. In Calcutta, the Mohammedan Association was founded. It had its effect on Sindh and a bureaucracy-backed

branch of the Association was opened in 1884. Mr. Hassan Ali, Advocate, played a major role in its formation.

Mr. Hassan Ali was later given the title of Khan Bahadur and he came to be known as Hassan Ali Afandi. He was a member of the Sindh Sabha but the Mohammedan Association branch was opened in Sindh after he had paid a visit to Calcutta. This marked the beginning of sectarianism in Sindh.

In 1884-85, efforts were made for the setting up of a college in Sindh. Diwan Dayaram Gidumal Shahani played a prominent role in this regard. His enthusiasm infected Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and he lent a great helping hand to Shahani. In the fund-raising campaigns for the college, Diwan Meetharam Gidumal Shahani, Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and Diwan Noolrai Shogiram Advani played a major role. Gidumal and his young colleagues Khemchand and Harchandrai made a notable contribution. Hindus, Parsis, Europeans and a few Muslims contributed to the fund but most of the latter stayed away because Hassan Ali Afandi was opposed to the move.

Afandi proposed the establishment of the Sindh Madressah and started to collect funds for the purpose from affluent Muslims. His arguments in favour of establishing the madressah were quite weighty. Sindhi Muslims were far behind other communities in the field of education and they badly needed an institution of the type proposed by Afandi. The Muslims of Sindh should be grateful to Afandi for his selfless devotion in turning his proposal into reality. His great efforts popularised education among Sindhi Muslims and its benefits were reaped by Sindh as a whole.

The Sindh Madressah was established in September, 1885. The first board of the school comprised the following:

Khan Bahadur Hassan Ali Afandi, President; Khan Bahadur Najmuddin, vice-president; Sardar Muhammad Yaqub Sheikh Muhammad Ismail, Khan Bahadur Khudadad Khan, Khan Bahadur Wali Muhammad Hassan Ali, Khan Bahadur Ali Muhammad Hassan Ali, Seth Alibhai Karimji, Seth Ghulam Hussain Chagla, Seth Nur Muhammad Lasan, Seth Saleh Muhammad Umer Dossal, Seth Ghulam Hussain Khaliqdino, Seth Faiz Muhammad Fateh Ali and Shahzada Muhammad Yaqub.

The Sindh Arts College — the first in the province — was established in 1887. The Following were the members of its board.

Adharam Moolchand, Daulatram Jethmal, Tahilram Khemchand, Harchandrai, Aloomal Tikamdas, Pestoonji Behramji Kotwal (Sindh College Association). Wadhomal Chandiram (Karachi District Local Board). Faiz Muhammad Fateh Ali (Karachi Municipal Committee). Navarai Shoqiram (Hyderabad Municipal Committee). G.H. Elon (Sukkur Municipal Committee). Daulatram Suratsingh (Shikarpur Municipal Committee). Parumal Khubchand (Upper Sindh Frontier District Local Board).

In 1882, when Lord Ripon was the Viceroy, the powers of local self-government bodies were increased. Members of the municipal committees and district local boards began to be elected. In this respect, Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and Diwan Dayaram Gidumal presented their views to the government at great length as did Diwan Oudharam Moolchand and Diwan Daulatram Jethmal (Dayaram Jethmal's brother).

Elections to the Karachi Municipal Committee were held for the first time in 1884. Campaign speeches and pamphleteering created great awareness in the people and they started to take interest in civic affairs. This led to the election of deserving people as councillors. In 1887, a new party was formed under the leadership of Tahilram Khemchand, Nagendranath Gupta and

Harchandrai. But this party lost in all constituencies except Trimoorthe where Nagendranath Gupta's victory proved that the voters there were politically alive. Gupta had defeated Hassan Ali Afandi who was nominated to the municipality as an official member.

In this fashion, the intellectuals of Sindh continued to serve their people. Sindhi leaders made a notable contribution to the formation of the Indian National Congress at whose inaugural session Sindh was represented in 1885 by Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and Diwan Oudharam. Sindh was represented at the annual sessions of the Congress afterwards, too. At the second session in Calcutta, Hiranand Shohqiram Advani, Gobindbux and Seth Vishandas attended the first three sessions and the fourth was attended by Diwan Tahilram Khemchand, Seth Harchandrai Vishandas and others.

The mentor of many public figures in Sindh, Diwan Tahilram Khemchand died on August 21, 1888. This was a great blow to Sindh. Diwan Dayaram Gidumal, being a government servant, was generally posted outside Sindh and, therefore, the mantle of leadership fell on the shoulders of Dayaram Jethmal's life-long friend, Diwan Oudharam Moolchand who was for some years president of the Karachi municipality and a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. In those days, three young men were forging ahead and Sindh had high expectations of them. They were Tahilram Khemchand, Harchandrai Vishandas and Hiranand Khemsingh. In the early years of the Congress, these three received guidance from the party's founding father, Mr. Hume. Diwan Oudharam Moolchand was succeeded by Diwan Tahilram Khemchand who did his best to improve the lot of the people whom he served as a member of the Karachi municipality from 1887 onwards and as president from 1896 to 1905 in which year he died at the young age of 42.

Harchandrai was his right-hand man in his efforts at community development. Harchandrai paid great tribute to him during the 28th Congress session in 1913 during the course of which he said:

"Diwan Tahilram always used to dream of organising a Congress session in Karachi. Had he been alive today, he would have addressed the delegates as chairman of the welcome committee. In his death, Sindh has lost a leader of exceptional merit. The Diwan had high ideas about public life. His efforts at improving the socio-economic conditions of the people are laudable, indeed. He regarded public service as a duty regardless of praise or censure. His achievements will serve as a beacon light for the people of Sindh."

Tahilram was succeeded by Harchandrai and quite deservedly so because, as the former's close associate, he had acquired full knowledge of the problems facing Sindh. Before him, the Bombay provincial conference had been held in Karachi eight times. Although Sindh was part of Bombay, it was cut off from the latter from reasons of geography and communications. Sindh was represented in none of these conferences. During the eighth conference in Pehlgam, the president of the moot, Mr. Dinshaw Eduljee said that an invitation had been received from Karachi that the ninth conference be held there. This surprised the delegates greatly. Expressing immense happiness, Dr. Vacha said, "This proves that the Sindhis are beginning to wake up and that after years of indolence, they are trying now to stand on their own feet. Let us strive to make the Karachi conference a success. Karachi is a remote city but distance should not dampen our enthusiasm."

Eventually, it was decided that the ninth conference should be held in Karachi but everyone was afraid that the event might not succeed. Even the Sindhis themselves had their doubts. In spite of fervent appeals by Dr. Vacha, only a handful of delegates from Bombay

attended but the Sindhis came in large numbers with renewed hopes and aspirations. They participated in the proceedings enthusiastically and made a name for themselves and for Sindh.

The conference was held in the Burnes Gardens and was presided over by Mr. Chandrawakar. The welcome committee was headed by Mir Allah Bux Khan Talpur Shahwani. Delegates who come from other parts of Bombay included Mr. G.K. Gokhale, Mr. DA Vacha, Mr. D.A Khare Mr. RP Kirdekar, Mr. VN Apte, Mr. Dharwa, Mr. LR Gokhale, Mr. Da Ji Apte, Dr. PG Swami, Mr. D.B. Kulkarni and others.

The conference passed several resolutions on various problems facing Sindh. Among those who spoke on these resolutions were Diwan Dulatram Jethmal, Diwan Tahilram Khemchand, Seth Harchandrai Vishandas, Mr. Ghulam Hussain Chagla, Mr. Pestunji, Behramji Kotwal, Diwan Nurbhdas, Diwan Thakurdas, Mr. Maazuddin Abdullah, Diwan Lalchand Noolrai, Mr. Hiranand Khemsingh, Mr. Thakurdas Khemchand, Mr. Lekhraj Talokchand, Mr. Himmatsingh Gujsingh and Professor P.G. Padshah.

After the 1895 conference things quietened down once again. This state of affairs continued for some years. When Harchandrai took over the reigns of leadership in Sindh, he decided to raise the level of public awareness in the people and kindle the spirit of social service in them, and make them realise their social and national identity. For this purpose, he decided to convene a Sindh provincial conference. This was done in 1908. The conference was an unqualified success.

It came to be realised that such conferences had their own utility. They brought together people belonging to various parts of Sindh who began to understand their problems and seek their solutions. Social life began to pick up in Sindh. The Sindh provincial conference gave the necessary experience

which made the all India Congress session possible five years later.

The first provincial conference created great excitement in Sindh and more than 500 delegates attended it. There were 700 at the moot. Although those who attended the conference had no previous experience of such moots, the resolutions presented and the well-argued speeches made proved that there was no dearth of talented people in Sindh imbued with the spirit of public service.

Harchandrai was elected chairman of the conference while the welcome committee was headed by Mr. Pesomal Rokiram who paid glowing tributes to Diwan Dayaram Jethmal and Diwan Tahilram. After them the honour of leading Sindh had been bestowed upon Harchandrai who fully deserved it. He said he was sure that Harchandrai would lead the conference in a befitting manner.

A grand civic reception was held for Harchandrai at the railway station and there was great fervour among those present. Seeing such enthusiasm Harchandrai said in his speech:

"So far, hosting an Indian Congress session has been a dream with us but after seeing the arrangements made for this conference, it can be said with confidence that this dream can come true. It is time we started working in this direction. At the same time, I may add that the Sindh provincial conference should be held every year." so great was the impact of the conference that invitations were received from Karachi, Hyderabad, Shikarpur and Larkana to host the second conference. Since the first conference had been held in the north of Sindh, it was decided to organise the second in the south in Hyderabad.

The following were the office-bearers of the first provincial conference. Seth Harchandrai (President) Mr. Pesomal Zokiram (Chairman Welcome Committee) Mr.

Himmatsingh G. Advani, Mr. Sajansingh, Fatehsingh, Mr. Veeromal Begraj, editor *Sindhi* Sukkur, Mr. Moolchand Pesomal, Mr. Lukhasingh, Karamchand, (six secretaries).

On the occasion of the first provincial moot, the first Sindh social conference was held in Sukkur. It was presided over by Diwan Koromal Chandanmal Khalnani. The inaugural speech was made by Prof. T.L. Waswani (Sadhu Waswani). Those who spoke on various resolutions were: Hasaram Vishandas Tharani, Reewachand Fatehchand, Heeranand Khemsingh, Mathradas Ramchand, Meewaram, Hariram, Wadhomal Tarachand, Choharmal Kundanmal, Tahilram Leelaram, Purbhdas Shewakram, Khemchand Amratrai.

Year	City	President	Chairman
1909	Hyderabad	Himatsing Gajasingh	Heeranand Khemsingh
1916	Larkana	Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari	Lalchand Noolrai
1917	Shikarpur	Heeranand Khemsing	Murleedhar Punjabi
1918	Karachi	Murleedhar Punjabi	Harchandrai Vishandas
1919	Jacobabad	Jamshed Nassuerwanji	Harchandrai Vishandas

Apart from these provincial conferences, some other important meetings were held. They are being listed below:

Date	President
Nature	
Nov 3, 1917	Harchandrai
Reforms.	

Nov 10, 1917
Reform Proposals.

Ghulam Ali Chagla

Nov 28, 1920
Struggle through cooperation

Durgadas Advani

The second session of the Indian National Congress was held in Karachi in 1941 (the first was held in 1913. (See chapter on the Indian National Congress). Sardar Valabhbhai Patel was president of the second session while the chairman of the welcome committee was Dr. Choithram Gidwani. The camp set up on the occasion was named Harchandrai Nagar to honour the memory of the departed leader. On this occasion Mr. Choithram throw some light on the career of the Harchandrai while introducing him he said that.

Seth Harchandrai Vishandas began his public career in 1886 when he set up his law practice. He was then 24. Thus began a life of social service which was to last to the very end.

He began his public life spanning 42 years with the Karachi municipality with which he was associated for 33 years. He was a member of the municipality from 1888 to 1898. Then he served it as legal advisor for another 11 years. He was elected a member once again in 1910, became president in 1911 and served in that capacity till 1921. He resigned after being elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly.

After the Minto-Morley reforms, he became a member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1910 on behalf of the Sindh municipalities. After the Montague-Chelmsford reforms in 1920, he was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly from the non-Mohammedan seat from Sindh in which capacity he served till the last. He was the doyen of the House and was given a front row seat as a mark of respect. He took over leadership in Sindh and served the people to the best of his ability and guided younger leaders.

A Glorious End

In 1927, the Indian Legislative Assembly began its session on August 18 in Simla. Harchandrai reached India's summer capital a day earlier. After about a week, he fell gravely ill, complaining of severe pain in his stomach. Doctors were called and he responded well to treatment. He was advised to leave Simla. When he felt better, he left for Karachi. Treatment continued and he would recover for a while and then a relapse would occur. He became very weak despite all possible medication and rest.

In spite of this, he continued to give time to matters of public concern. On January, 9, 1927, the British government announced the formation of the Simon Commission. All members of the Commission were British. No Indian was represented on it. This caused great resentment in the country and there was talk of boycotting it.

The commission members were to reach Bombay by sea on February 3, 1928. An all-India strike was announced for the day, which brought life to a standstill throughout the country.

Harchandrai had been vice-president of the Karachi Port Trust which was always headed by an Englishman. In the January 28 meeting of the trust, it was proposed that the next meeting scheduled for February 3 should be postponed because of the countrywide strike. The proposal was rejected but Harchandrai did not attend the meeting.

An Indian Legislative Assembly session began in Delhi on January 1, 1928. The viceroy addressed the assembly on February 2. Harchandrai was at the time in Karachi where it was rather cold because of which he fell

ill. Delhi was even colder. That was why he had not been able to attend the assembly session.

In the assembly, Lala Lajpatrai moved a motion of no-confidence in the Simon Commission. The motion was to be debated on February 16. A great tussle ensued between the government and the nationalist parties. The nationalists felt the absence of Seth Harchandrai badly. Apart from his own vote, his presence was needed to secure the support of those members who belonged to his circle. Consequently, Lajpatrai sent three telegrams to Harchandrai, requesting him to come to Delhi.

It was bitterly cold in Delhi. Harchandrai was 66 then. Illness had weakened him greatly and he was torn between his doctors and friends and relatives' request to rest and his desire to serve the national cause. The will to serve his people prevailed and he decided to leave for Delhi.

On February 14, he left Karachi by the Lahore Mail. By the time the train reached Sammasatta, his condition began to deteriorate and he started to vomit blood. In Bhatinda, he was asked to break journey and have himself examined and treated. But he was adamant in continuing his journey. He reached Delhi on the morning of the 16th. By that time, he had grown so weak that he had to be carried in a wheelchair from his railway compartment to the car which had come to fetch him. He was driven straight to hospital.

In spite of being critically ill, he insisted on being taken to the assembly to cast his vote. An ambulance was requisitioned. He died on his way to the assembly. Thus did this brave man sacrifice his life for the national cause.

His death sent a wave of shock and sorrow all over India. Newspapers published the news of his passing with black borders and condolence meetings were held in several cities.

Paying tribute to Harchandrai in his English language weakly, *The People*, Lajpatrai said he had died a glorious death. There could have been no better way to go.

The monthly *Modern Review* of Calcutta said that Harchandrai was a martyr to the call of duty.

The Hindustan Times of Delhi wrote editorially that Harchandrai had served his motherland gloriously by dying while considering that voting on the motion (against the Simon Commission) was his duty. It was an unprecedented example of nationalism which would be a permanent source of inspiration for the people.

The British owned *Daily Gazette* of Karachi wrote that Harchandrai's tragic demise was an irreparable loss to Sindh and Karachi. The one thing which gave some solace to the people was that he had made a great sacrifice while doing his duty by the people. What better way to go than this? The great son of Sindh had undertaken the journey without concern for his life to what he thought was important and necessary for the people.

The Sindh Observer, Karachi wrote: A martyr in the call of duty. A leading light of Sindhi public life. He returned from Simla to Karachi in bad health and went to Delhi to make the supreme sacrifice of his life. When his colleagues were locked in battle for the national cause, how could he remain in Karachi? Had the fate of the nation been sealed by one vote, he would have lived in torment to his very last breath. Therefore, he left for Delhi to be martyred in the performance of his duty.

His body was taken to his son-in-law's residence near the Kashmiri Gate from where a huge funeral procession was taken out. Among the assembly members who attended his last rites were:

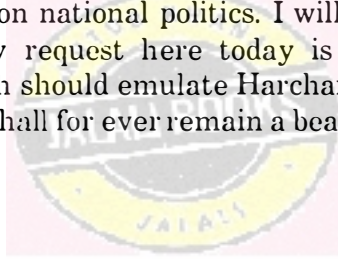
Pandit Madanmohan Malviya, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Vitthalbhai Patel, Lala Lajpatrai, Sir Walton Wilson, Sir

Manekji Dadabhai, Sardar Gulabsingh, Dr. Hyder, K.C. Neogi, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta and others.

All Sindhis living in Delhi were also present. They included Swami Gawnandanand, Jairamdas Daulatram, Prof. H.L. Chhublani and Acharya Gidvani.

Harchandrai's body was cremated on the bank of the river Yamuna. On his first death anniversary, a function was held in Karachi. Speaking on the occasion, Achariya Gidvani said:

"My eyes can still see the scene when Harchandrai came to Delhi at the call of the nation and laid down his life. had you been there, ladies and gentlemen, you would have also seen how he raised the status of Sindh and gave it a new pride by his great sacrifice and what impact it had on national politics. I will not go into that here. My only request here today is that the young people of Sindh should emulate Harchandrai because his life and work shall for ever remain a beacon light."



Tributes

Kafi in Bhairvi

Chamandas Ghehimal Halai

Seth Harchandrai, great servant of your people, all Sindh weeps for you.

When young, you were keen to acquire knowledge and you won honour for your father in all countries. You made the clarion call for national unity. You set aside all distinctions between the high and the low.

In the Karachi municipality, you roared like a lion and you shook the Bombay Council to its foundations.

The whole assembly acclaimed you and Jai Bharat was on every lip.

The railway service from Badin which served Tando Muhammad Khan and Mehrabpur by you. You fought the case for Lakhi and you gave new life to Sukkur.

You went to Delhi on Lajpat's call.

The call for India's freedom reached Harchand in Larkana and we all agreed to work for it.

On February 16, this great man laid down his life and there was a voice in the garden, urging you to be among us once again.

(From *Sindhi*, a Sukkur daily, February 16, 1930).

Sakhilal

Kishanchand Tirathdas Khatri Beewus

I saw in the chandelier of Sindh a glow bright and brilliant.

It blessed many homes and many parties and meetings with light.

His heart ached at the suffering of others and who took up the cause of the dispossessed and made their problems his own.

His were high ideals and strong principles and no-one dare lead him away from his path.

He did his duty to the last and he spent his life in serving the national cause.

He was the pride of Sindh, this pearl from Manjho. He did wonders in Karachi.

The son of Sindh went to India with great a bloom. Beewus, Seth Harchandrai was Sakhilal.

(The daily *Sindhi*, Sukkur, February 22, 1930).

The Brave Man of Sindh

(1)

He considered the people's problems as his own
For him was power and destiny and leadership
He shone like the sun of intellect and wisdom
This great man has departed from this world.

(2)

The great Sultan has left this world.
He was bright of visage and sweet of tongue
His eyes enthralled you
He risked his life for the sake of the people
This wonderful bird had flown away from us

(3)

The wonderful bird Harchandrai has flown away and left us

Member of the assembly, he was a debonair Sardar

That he should leave the garden was God's will
 He was renowned and respected throughout the
 country

He was a great son of Vishandas
 And all of us are shedding tears without end.

(4)

Tears flow down and the heart is on fire
 His memory lives in us still
 He now lives in the mountains
 The great one no-one could cross

(5)

No-one could gainsay him, he was so nonchalant
 He left the bright garden, woe betide us
 Generous and beloved of all, champion of the weak
 The gem of India is no more, Fani.
 (Kheeldas V. Begwani Fani Vidyarthi.
 In the monthly *Shanti*, Karachi, February, 1930.

A Grand old Gentleman

Seth Harchandrai died in Delhi on February 16, 1928. A condolence meeting was held in the court of the judicial commissioner, Karachi, the following day. All judges and most lawyers attended. T.G. Elphinstone, public prosecutor for Sindh and president Karachi Bar Association paid tributes to the departed leader. The judicial commissioner, P.A. Percival, speaking on his own behalf and on behalf the other judges reviewed Harchandrai's achievements during different phases of his career and expressed sorrow at his passing.

In his speech, Mr. Elphinstone said: "Harchandrai could be called a grand old gentleman not only of Karachi but also all of Sindh. He was a man of high moral character, fearless and truthful. Whenever he undertook a task he saw to it that it was accomplished. He used a language which could be easily understood and one was always sure that he meant what he said.

"Those of us who came into contact with him will agree with me when I say that we have lost a good friend. I knew him personally for twenty years and consider it as an honour. One always learnt in his company.

"Seth Harchandrai was a member of the Karachi Bar Association for the last 42 years it would not be wrong to say that he was the father of the entire Sindh bar. From beginning to end, he was honorary secretary of the Karachi Bar and took great interest in his work. He performed his duties with great interest and the public works he undertook were always completed.

"It was only last Sunday that he attended the committee meeting and, like always, gave us useful advice. His ability and experience were of great use to us

and his guidance was always invaluable whenever we were faced with important and intricate problems.

"He practised law to the last despite heavy demand on his time. He was a prominent lawyer and he made a name for himself both in civil and criminal cases.

"He played a major role in nurturing public life in Sindh. He was president of the Karachi municipality and was a trustee and vice-president of the Karachi Port Trust. He knew how to conduct public meetings and he put his heart and soul into it. He was a perceptive leader and his views were always full of wisdom. His way of functioning was unique. He continued to serve several parties and the people at large.

"He won recognition in the council and the legislative assembly. Just one proof of his greatness would be more than ample here. In spite of extreme ill health and against the advice of his doctors and friends, he went to Delhi to cast his vote against the Simon Commission and it was there that he died in an ambulance while on his way to the assembly.

"Harchandrai has left behind a glorious example of selfless public service with the great honesty and probity."

P.A. Percival, the judicial commissioner, Sindh said: "All member of the bench including myself concur with the views expressed here today. Harchandrai's sudden demise has saddened us all.

"You have referred to his achievements. Keeping in view his services to the city, one can't help saying that his death has been a grievous blow to Karachi."

"In this court, Harchandrai was a senior lawyer who was regarded as the father of the Bar. Outside the court, he was an important leader. He was for several years legal adviser to the Karachi municipality. Later, he was president of the civic body for ten years running. He became famous outside Sindh for his work in the legislative council and the legislative assembly. After the Minto-Morley Reforms, he was elected to the Bombay

Legislative Council in 1910 and held his seat right up to 1920. This was unprecedented not only in Bombay but in the whole of India. It shows how keen he was to serve the people on the one hand and his great popularity on the other.

"I was a member of the Bombay Council and I knew Harchandrai from those days. Later, I was also a member of the legislative assembly for some time and my association with him continued. I can say it with conviction that Harchandrai was an important and prominent member of the Bombay Legislative Council and the Indian Legislative Assembly and his intelligence and astuteness were acclaimed in both houses. He was deeply interested in national development. His dedicated hard work for Sindh will be especially remembered. He advocated the Sukkur Barrage scheme adroitly because he was convinced that it would bring prosperity to Sindh. On behalf of the members of the Bench as well as on my on behalf, I express a deep sense of sorrow and anguish at Harchandrai's untimely demise and offer our deep sympathies to the bereaved family."

Distinguished

[A Son of Sindh]

A condolence meeting was held at the Khalikdino Hall by the citizens of Karachi on February 28, 1928. It was presided over by the Commissioner of Sindh. The hall was filled to capacity and people belonging to diverse schools of thought and communities were represented there.

The *Daily Gazette* wrote that it was one of the largest and most important meetings ever held in Karachi. Tributes were paid to the great leader and moving scenes were witnessed. Those who made speeches on the occasion, spoke of their personal experience of Harchandrai's honesty and probity. They said that Sindh had been truly deprived of a distinguished and generous son. It was also said that his life and work would be a beacon light for the coming generations.

Commissioner Hudson said he had known Harchandrai for 30 years and added that his services to Sindh were as clear as broad daylight. The meeting decided to raise a memorial for Harchandrai. A committee comprising rich and influential citizens was constituted to raise funds for the purpose. The commissioner was authorised to nominate more members to the committee. The following were the members of the committee: T.G. Elphinstone, F. Claton, W.N. Richardson, Sobhraj Chetomal, Dr. A.D. Sharaf, Lakhmichand Aeesardas, Keematrai Aasomal, Keewalmal Goordandas, Hasasingh Lalsingh, Hoshing

N.A. Dinshaw, M. Maskeetha, Mir Ayub Khan, Bhagwandas Lakhram Ahoja, Deepchand Chandomal, Durgadas B. Adwani, Ghulam Ali. G. Chaghla, Hareedas, Laljee, Dr. G.T. Hingorani, Shivaram Dewonmal, Hareelal S. Sharma, Aeesardas Varindmal, Jamsheed N.R. Mehta, Jehangir N. Panthki, S.H. Lila, Sohrab H. Katrak, Moolchand Koromal, Moolchand Kheeldas, N.D. Malik, K. Panya, Shoqutrai Werhomal, Shortun J. Mohata, Ilasomal Cheelaram, Lala Jaswantra, Yusuf Ali, Ali Bhai.

The Commissioner, Mr. D.F. Hudson made the following speech:

"I am grateful to the invitation extended to me to attend today's meeting and to preside over it. It is a matter of satisfaction that all classes and communities are represented here in such large numbers.

"Hyperbolic praise is not one of the traits of British character but I am sure that those who will speak after me will do a far better job of it.

"I consider it necessary today to say something about an old friend of 30 years' standing. I use the term 'old friend' for all that it connotes. From the first day to the last our relationship grew stronger and stronger. We used to meet quite often to discuss matters of public concern. Our acquaintanceship turned into friendship. I have spent some more time in Karachi and it is a matter of sorrow that I have been deprived of this relationship which had reached a point where we would discuss everything frankly and openly. There was no possibility of any misunderstanding between us. In the last phase of my career, I valued Harchandrai's opinion more highly than that of any other person. I do not have the time to throw light on all aspects of his life. I will refer to only three instances here.

I met Harchandrai for the first time when I was a young magistrate while he had started to make a name

for himself as a lawyer. That was a long time ago. Even so, I remember that whenever Rai Sahib appeared in court, I would benefit a great deal. I knew that he attended court to help it and not to obstruct it. I know that Harchandrai had three working principles: he would argue in a simple and straight manner for obtaining justice; he would not break his chain of thought and he would not waste the court's time. He was always on his best conduct.

"Towards the end of his life, Harchandrai devoted all his time to national and civic affairs. In spite of this, I am not surprised that he attained such a pinnacle as a lawyer which no-one else could.

"When he became president of the Karachi municipality, we began to meet more frequently. Others more competent than myself are present here today and they can speak better than I can on his achievements as president of the municipality. I will refer to just one aspect here. His attitude towards the bureaucracy regarding municipal matters was exemplary and one has to praise it. He ranks high among the presidents of the municipality.

"When the scope of the Government of India Act was extended, he represented Sindh in the Indian legislative Assembly for eight years. I know better than most people present here about what he did and what status he attained and find it necessary to talk about it here. For some time in the first assembly and the Simla and Delhi sessions we were often in touch with each other.

"I have just returned from the third session and I can assure you that every member had been grieved at his death.

"Harchandrai was an excellent speaker and this had made him greatly popular in the House. His speeches were well-reasoned, weighty and full of revelations. He would never speak on a subject without first studying it thoroughly. As a result, when he rose to speak, the

president would at once become attentive as would indeed the entire House.

"Even after the seating arrangement in the House was made on the basis of party alignments, all of them by consensus agreed to reserve a front row seat for Harchandrai. This privilege he retained till the last. He was equally popular with every party in the House and he was a great gentlemen.

"No matter on which subject he spoke and what his views on it, he never hurt anyone's feelings. He knew there were two sides to everything under discussion. He never criticised those who differed with him on any subject.

"For the last few years there were communal riots and general tension in Delhi and Sindh which greatly saddened this kind-hearted man. We used to discuss the matter from time to time. These conflicts were caused by social suspicions and stubbornness and a kind and generous man like Harchandrai could not understand them, but he hated communalism and spent all his time in seeking peace and goodwill.

"Those who regard themselves as his friends will, I am sure, keep his glorious traditions alive. We can raise a grand memorial for him by following in his footsteps. There can be no tribute greater than this for Harchandrai.

"We have lost an old friend for ever and we will not see his familiar face in courtrooms, assemblies, processions and meetings. A man can't help display his power and authority but this was alien to Harchandrai. In my view, his death has created a great vacuum in the public life of Karachi, Sindh and India. And in the hearts of his friends also there is a vacuum which will not be easy to fill."

Regal Life, Regal Death

On Harchandrai's sixth death anniversary on February 16, 1934, his statue was unveiled in the compound of the Karachi municipal committee offices. People of all shades of opinion and beliefs attended the ceremony.

The compound was well decorated and a stage was set up for the members of the memorial committee, councillors and the elite of the city.

On Harchandrai's death, a condolence meeting was held in Khalikdino Hall where a memorial committee headed by Jamshed Nausserwanji was appointed. The secretary of the committee was Seth Aecsardas Varindmal. The committee decided to build a statue of the departed leader. This was done at a cost of Rs. 16,000. The money was raised through donations from the people of Karachi and the rest of Sindh. The statue was made by the noted Bombay sculptor, Talim, who had earlier made a Shivaji statue in Poona (now Pune).

Speaking on the unveiling ceremony, the memorial committee chairman Jamshed Nausserwanji paid glorious tributes to Harchandrai and said the statue would always remind the people of a great son of Sindh who had done so much for awakening the masses.

He then requested Mr. Ghulam Ali Chagla to unveil the statue. Before doing so, Chagla made a speech in the course of which he said Harchandrai was one of the most important disciples of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. He has replaced incompetent assessors and auditors in the Karachi municipal committee with able and deserving officers which led to a great improvement in the working of the civic body. he ensured that there would be no

outside interference in the working of the municipal staff so that it could perform its duties impartially. If they deviated from the straight path, however, action was taken against them. When Harchandrai thought that it would be in the public interest to remove a municipal official, he did so without hesitation. Mr. Chagla reviewed his career, especially his last visit to Delhi despite grave ill health and said that Harchandrai lived like a King and died like a king.

"This statue will remind future generations that Harchandrai was a great son of Sindh who devoted a lifetime to public service and laid down his life for the national cause.



Harchandrai 1862-1928:

A Great Sindhi

As they say, a diamond can be born anywhere. Seth Harchandrai was born in a small village Manjho in Sindh. Who would have known that a rose would blossom in that small village whose fragrance would spread all over India? Manjho is in Tehsil Kotri. His father, Seth Vishandas was known for his public service. Harchandrai was born in 1862. It would require a book to record his services in the field of education and social welfare. Today, everyone's attention is riveted on the national struggle (for independence). These few words are about the role played by the son of Sindh in this struggle.

Seth Harchandrai joined the Congress when he was 26. It was through his efforts that the 1913 session of the Indian National Congress was held in Karachi. He himself was the Chairman of the welcome committee. The Karachi session was presided over by Nawab Syed Muhammad who was a descendant of Tipu Sultan. It was under the influence of Seth Harchandrai that Seth Ghulam Ali Chagla, Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari and others joined the Congress and played a major part in making the Karachi session a success.

Harchandrai would attend all social and national conferences in Sindh with great enthusiasm. he presided over the ninth Bombay provincial conference in Karachi and did full justice to the job. He also presided over the first provincial conference in Sukkur and the reforms conference in Hyderabad in 1917. He was the chairman of the fifth provincial conference in Karachi in 1918 and the special conference on the commonwealth of India bill

in 1926. His speeches were always well argued and informative.

Seth Harchandrai was the apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity in Sindh. He was for some time president of the Hindu-Muslim Ekta Board. The board's meetings were often held in his office. Whenever communal misunderstandings arose, he would remove them with his own charmingly persuasive mediation. He was a national leader of a liberal bent of mind. There was no difference in his words and deeds. He was for 18 years a member of the Bombay council and the Indian legislative assembly for eight years. He was known for his wisdom and vision and his affable social behaviour endeared him to his friends and colleagues. He commanded everyone's faith and confidence.

That is why Lala Lajpatrai invited him by telegram to Delhi to vote against the Simon Commission, and he went despite great ill health. Tributes were paid to him at the 45th annual session of the Indian Congress and it was acknowledged that he was the moving spirit behind the first Congress session in Karachi in 1913. The fact that he was the first martyr of the national struggle against the Simon Commission bespeaks his greatness. The camp that we have set up for you has been named Harchandrai Nagar to pay tribute to his greatness. (Article in the *Sindh Chronicle*, October, 1931.)

Harchandrai Vishindas

(1862-1928)

Memoria in Aterna

*"He was a MAN, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."*

HAMLET

On Thursday the 16th February 1928, exactly six years ago, Indians at home and abroad were anxiously awaiting the verdict of the Indian Legislative Assembly on the Simon Commission. The papers, instead of telling us the result of the momentous debate, stirred us deeply by announcing that it had been adjourned owing to the death of the noblest son of Sindh. He had died on his way to the council-chamber; his physical remains had been cremated on the banks of the sacred Jamna; and Pandits Motilal Nehru and Madanmohan Malaviya, Mr. V.J. Patel, and Lala Lajpatrai had been among his pall bearers. At Delhi, *The Hindustan Times* had described the event thus: "Every seat in every gallery was occupied, and even the ladies' gallery was packed not with the proverbial sardines, but with more picturesque butterflies. An animated full-dress debate was expected and punctually at eleven o'clock almost every member was in his seat. But little did the busy whips, the officials swaggering in morning coats, the Nationalists and the Swarajists, all hopeful of a signal triumph, realize that before the bell for the division lobby would ring, another and more doleful knell announcing the death of Mr. Harchandrai Vishindas, the oldest member

of the Assembly, would sound and spread its pall of grief over the chamber.... Little did these gentlemen know that at that very time, the great hero who at the risk of his life had undertaken to come to Delhi to record his lack of faith in the Simon Commission, was already preparing to lay himself on the altar of martyrdom, immediately after lunch I saw the non-official whips busy telephoning to various hospitals to obtain an ambulance to convey the brave Harchandrai to the Assembly. 'Don't get him if he is not fit,' said one gentleman. 'But he simply insists on coming', said one of the whips. They knew not that Mr. Harchandrai at that time had passed the stage when ambulances were needed, and had cast his vote finally and definitely in the lobby of immortality".

To few mortals is a more glorious death vouchsafed. But this was merely the crowning point of a long life of uninterrupted service to the motherland. To understand fully the significance which Harchandrai's life holds for Sindhis, it is essential to remember that it stretched over a period of more than sixty years which saw the development of Sindh from an unimportant newly conquered strip of British territory into an almost independent and autonomous province. Not a little of this development was the direct result of his efforts.

Harchandrai was born in April 1862 in the tiny hamlet of Manjhu in Kotri Tehsil. His father, who actually survived him, was the late Seth Vishindas Nihalchand (1843-1929) known to three generations of Sindhis as one of the greatest philanthropists, social reformers and patrons of music that the province has produced. Seth Vishindas's father, Seth Nihalchand, was the first Sindhi to have imbibed the teachings of the Gulabdasi School of thinkers of the Punjab and the spiritual guide of the well-known *fakir* Bachal Shah in whose honour an annual fair is held in Upper Sindh to the present day. Seth Vishindas was not content to

adopt the Gulabdasi tenets as received by him at second hand from his father, but hied to the Punjab on a pilgrimage to the fountain-head of this peculiar faith and passed a few years at the feet of Maharaj Gulabdas himself. He came back convinced that the root causes of our national torpor were our neglect of education, our lopsided view of life and our blind obedience to superstitious tradition. Education and reform became his watchwords. Harchandrai was his first child and to his education the late Seth Sahib paid special attention.

Harchandrai was for four years at the Sindhi School at Kotri and then came to Karachi to become one of the first pupils of Narayan Jagannath after whom i.e. Government High School is named. In 1878, when he appeared for the Matriculation examination, Karachi became for the first time a centre for that examination. In later days he used to recall humorously that no less than twenty Sindhis had sat this year, whereas only three had been sent up to Bombay from this province the previous year. The D.J. Sindh College was not then in existence. (In fact, Harchandrai himself was one of those who later assisted Diwan Dayaram Gidumal in raising the funds required for the foundation of that college). He prosecuted his studies at the Elphinstone College, Bombay, where one of his teachers was Professor Wordsworth, the grandson of the famous English poet. He graduated in 1882, with History and Political Economy as his optional subjects. He proceeded to the L.L.B. degree in 1885 when, after a few months spent in Government service, he began his career as a lawyer at Karachi.

The office he founded then is still in existence and bears his name. He at once made a mark in the profession. A few days after he had joined the Bar Association, he was elected as its Secretary, a post which he held right upto the end of his life, that is to say, for upwards of forty years, with unsurpassed zeal, ability and

independence. The younger members of the Bar remember Harchandrai chiefly as a criminal lawyer with remarkable powers of advocacy. His multifarious public activities left him very little time for civil work. But in the prime of his life he was a very thorough and painstaking civil lawyer too, as is evidenced by the fact that in 1809 he was appointed Legal Adviser to the Karachi Municipality, a position which he enjoyed until he became President of that body in 1911. The encouragement which he extended to juniors may be judged from the fact that no less than seventeen of his clerks rose to be lawyers, several of them cutting brilliant figures in the profession.

As a young man, Harchandrai had come into close and intimate contact with men like Diwan Dayaram Gidumal, Sadhu Hiranand, Tahilram Khemchand, Burjorji Padshah and Nagendranath Gupta. They were a band of enthusiastic workers dedicated to a life of service and sacrifice. To Dayaram Gidumal and Tahilram Khemchand his diary pays glowing tributes. His illustrious record may be traced to a youthful determination to make himself as useful a servant of society as possible. Like Wordsworth's Happy Warrior, *"he wrought Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought."*

In the year 1888, Tahilram Khemchand's party, of which Harchandrai was a most important member, caused a sensation by defeating the then doyens of Karachi's civic life in the Municipal elections and thus infusing a fresh and youthful spirit into the city's administration. Harchandrai's association with the Karachi Municipality lasted for thirty-three years. On his return from Europe in 1911, he was elected President of the Municipality. During his impressive *regime* the Municipality acquired the area at present known as the Bunder Road Extension. He organized the staff, improved their salaries and got them war bonus.

He also rewarded the work of his executive officers. In his days the bed of the Lyari, which was a constant nuisance and a menace to the entire locality, was reclaimed. The public clamoured that the area should be named after him, but he declined the honour and insisted upon the quarter being named after Mr. Lea, the able engineer who had prepared and carried out the scheme. During the Influenza epidemic he obtained "full powers" from the Government to close all places of public entertainment where more than fifty people collected. He used his powers courageously and closed all theaters and picture-houses for a month, to the great hanging of numerous influential friends who happened to own those houses. The magnificent Kothari Parade and Lady Loyd Pier at Clifton were also built during his administration. This high position he voluntarily relinquished in 1921 when his election to the new Indian Legislative Assembly necessitated his absence from Karachi for long periods. When he retired from the Municipality, the feelings of the public were voiced by *The Daily Gazette* in the following terms:— "If the new council secures a President one-half as able, as conscientious, as self-sacrificing and as hard-working, it will be fortunate."

The 1896 Plague plunged the entire city of Karachi into a state of panic and chaos. Harchandrai followed his father's lead in assisting the authorities in dealing with the terrible situation and relieving untold suffering. Maharaj Rewachand Ratanchand has placed on record his personal experience of Harchandrai's noble services during that dark period.

Harchandrai was the first Sindhi to join the Indian National Congress. He attended the fourth sessions of the Congress in 1888 and spoke on behalf on Sindh that year and every subsequent year upto 1918. For thirty years he meant Sindh to Congress and Congress to Sindh. In Dayaram Gidumal's *Life of Sadhu Hiranand* it

is recorded that when the Sadhu and his friends corresponded with Hume and other founders of the Congress, they were referred to Harchandrai who had already become the messenger from the fathers of national awakening to the sleepy hollow of Sindh.

He was the President of the first Sindh Provincial Conference held at Sukkur in 1908, as also of the Special Sindh Provincial Conference on Reforms convened long afterwards at Hyderabad. He was responsible for the Indian National Congress being held at Karachi for the first time in 1913; and the citizens with one voice rewarded him by electing him Chairman of the Reception Committee. Eighteen years later, when he was no more in their midst, they again paid a fitting tribute to their illustrious leader by naming the 1931 Congress Camp after him. The soul-stirring scenes that were witnessed in the Harchandrai Nagar are fresh in every one's memory.

On the inauguration of the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1910, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council of which he was a prominent member till 1921. This period was marked by his solid work in respect of primary education, *rasai*, *lapo* and *chher*, improvement in canals and revision of land assessment. He also served on the Rasai and Matiari Committees. He and his great friend Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari were two of the most important members of Sir Pherozshah Mehta's Nationalist party in the Council.

As soon as the Montford Reforms came into force, he was elected as one of Sindh's representatives in the Legislative Assembly at Delhi. He continued to be a member till his death. His budget speeches were always listened to with attention, and verily they are the utterances of a great patriot. He resigned his membership as a protest against the Viceroy's certification of the Salt Tax and was re-elected without opposition. His speeches against the repressive

measures in the Punjab, for the release of Mahatma Gandhi and other political prisoners, on the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes Amendment Bills, Special Marriage Bill, abolition of cotton excise duty and return to India of Mr. Horniman are well-known. It was in response to Lala Lajpatrai's call that he undertook that last journey which led to his death. "Oh! what an end it was" wrote Lalaji, "no soldier on the battlefield could have died a more glorious death."

Harchandrai was a member of the Karachi Port Trust for an aggregate period of nine years. He first joined the Board in 1911. He was the Board's Vice-Chairman on three successive occasions and took the keenest interest in the affairs of the Port. He was a member of the Managing Committee of Karachi Indian Merchants' Association and its representative on the Port Trust. He was a member of the D.J. Sindh College Board for a number of years. He was a member of the Khalikdina Library upto his death and its President for several years. The Lady Dufferin Hospital and Louis Lawrence Institute, the Idarieu Poor Welfare Association, the Sindh Hindu Sabha, the Hindu Town People's Association are some of the associations and bodies which owe a debt of gratitude to his constant help, unfailing sympathy and generous support and all of them have expressed in eloquent terms their appreciation of his valuable services. During the last ten years of life, his office had become the permanent venue for all meetings convened for the purpose of promoting better understanding between different communities and conflicting interests.

From this brief enumeration of his public activities, it is clear that Harchandrai was the foremost figure in Sindh's history for four decades. To few men in life is given the proud privilege of being able to render such signal services to their compatriots. He had the unprecedented record of having never lost a single

election, an unmistakable index of the esteem and affection in which he was held by his people. The secret of his phenomenal success lay in this political integrity, his sincerity, his philanthropy, and his self-effacement. As Mr. T.G. Elphinstone declared, "When Seth Harchandrai said anything be sure that he meant it." Everyone remembers how he resisted the temptation of standing on what was called the Swarajist ticket and thus securing an easy and unopposed election. He preferred the infinite vexations of a strenuous election. He preferred the infinite vexations of a strenuous election to the ease of a walk-over achieved by the acceptance of a political creed to some of the principles of which he could not conscientiously subscribe.

As a social figure, Harchandrai's position in Sindh was unique. He was one of the founders of the Sindhi Gymkhana and the Karachi Club and was twice elected President of the latter. He took a leading part in the founding of the Hindu Gymkhana and upto the end evinced a lively interest in its development. He was a brilliant conversationalist and a great postprandial speaker. He had an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes. Not a week passes when some of his jokes are not affectionately recalled and quoted in the corridor, lounge and dining-room of the Karachi Club. He was, however, an inimitable *raconteur*. Every witty saying, retort, epigram or *bon mot* that he uttered bore the distinct impress of his personality..

It is not commonly known that Harchandrai was one of the three or four best-read men of his time in Sindh. His reading was vast and varied. Never a pedant, he could not, however, help being allusive in private conversation, in public speech, in forensic address and in contributions to the press. His was a memory rich with the spoils of the ages. When he began to talk or to write, he had the reading of a life-time behind him. His imagination worked upon an accumulated store which

his ripe experience had considerably enhanced. He often drew upon this store without conscious distinction of its sources. There was always the scholar's flavour of literary reminiscence hanging about his casual words and phrases.

Harchandrai's Diary, which stretches over nearly half-a-century, in which one of the earliest entries describes how he and his beloved friend and guide. Tahilram Khemchand felt when they delivered their maiden speeches in the National Congress and in which the last entry records in half-a-dozen feebly written words his determination to proceed to Delhi in his final illness, is a vast store-house of information and suggestion. Only the immensity of the task has prevented the members of his family from publishing it.. When at last it is properly edited and placed before the public, it is sure to become a book of incalculable value to the student of history, sociology and politics.

Harchandrai was the most musical member of a family of music-lovers. He had an amazing knowledge of the intricacies of classical Indian music. He was the life and soul of the Musical Conference held at Karachi in 1926 in which the late Pundit Vishnu Digambar and his troupe of artists delighted large audiences. Even outside Sindh, even in the presence of eminent *connoisseurs* of music he became invariably and inevitably the dictator of a musical *soiree*.

It is essential to draw attention to these aspects of his life, because great as his achievements as a lawyer and as a public servant were, greater still was somehow the *man* himself. An auspicious combination of qualities of head and heart had helped him to develop a harmonious personality. It was a personality which could absorb almost anything and yet retain its essential nature. Frankly, he was no ascetic: why should he have been one? We in India are prone to accept false values, with the result that a scholar of the type of Burlap or a

humbug that manage to look like a Pre-Raphaelite Christ easily ensnares us and wins our allegiance. Now if there was anything which even Harchandrai's large, sympathetic soul with its infinite milk of human kindness could not tolerate, it was religious hypocrisy. Religious hypocrisy and fanaticism were anathema to him. Like his remarkable father, he waged a life-long war against these two evils. *Ecrasez Pinfame*- this famous phrase of Voltaire's summed up his philosophy of life. As we said, he was no ascetic. He believed with Bacon, that in this theater of man's life it is reserved only for God and the angels to be mere lookers-on. He was a master of the most difficult of arts__ the art of living. He loved the good things of life. He cared for comfort, for action, for friendship, for music, for laughter__ yes, laughter that rainbows the tears of the world. He believed in extracting joy from every hour of his life; but he was so constituted that joy was no joy to him unless he radiated it among those around him. He had a genius for friendship. Thanks to his own invincible sense of loyalty, he gathered around him a host of friends widely divergent in their temperament and outlook on life His owner of adapting himself to his environment was astounding. He was a child among children, a kindly and benevolent elder brother to adolescents and a genial and engaging friend to the grown-ups. His interests were not confined to law and politics; they were all embracing. He passed through his heterogeneous occupations with equal ease. He was at home in the council chamber, the law court, the lawyer's office, the club, the intellectual gathering and the boisterous picnic. His life was a parallelogram of forces in which the resultant was a musical synthesis and delight. For those of us who knew him intimately, the mere recollection of his inspiring presence, his captivating smile and his baritone manliness will ever be a ceaseless source of comfort in a world consumed by mean and purposeless hate.

Hiralal Srichand Bharvani



Harchandrai Vishandas

Late Honourable Harchandrai Vishindas, C.I.E., B.A., L.L.B., was a towering personality of Sindh. After passing his Law examination in 1885 he started his practice in Karachi and soon rose to be one of the best lawyers of Sindh. He had a passion for Politics, because he was inspired with true zeal to serve the people of his province.

He was a member of Karachi Bar Association for 42 years and had acted as the Hon. Secretary for some time. He was a member of the Karachi Municipality from 1888 to 1899. From 1899 to 1910, he was the legal advisor to Karachi Municipality. From 1911 to 1921 he was the President of Karachi Municipality. As the President of Karachi Municipality he did a lot to modernise our City. He is one of the Makers of the Modern Karachi, "the Queen of the East". From 1910 to 1921 he was a member of Bombay Legislative Council as a representative of the Municipalities of Sindh. He did very useful work as a member of the Bombay Council and exposed the evils of Rasai and Lapo and was one of the members of Rasai Commission appointed by the Bombay Government. He was also a member of Matiar Firing Committee appointed by the Government. He was a Trustee of the Port of Karachi for 9 years and was its Vice-Chairman thrice. He was a member of Standing Committee of D.J. Sindh College and was one of the founders of Karachi Club.

He was a strong Congress man and was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of Congress of 1913 and was President of many Congress Conferences held in Sindh. He as a great believer of Hindu Muslim

Unity and was a Sufi by temperament. His love for his country and his loyalty to his party made him leave his sick bed to go to Delhi to vote for the Boycott of Simon Commission in 1928 and the journey from Karachi to Delhi at the advanced age of 66, was too much for him. He died on his way to the council-chamber; his physical remains were cremated on the banks of the sacred Jamna; and late Pandits Motilal Nehru and Madanmohan Malaviya, late Mr. V.J. Patel, and Lala Lajpatrai were among his pall bearers. At Delhi, the "Hindustan Times" described the event thus: "Every seat in every gallery was occupied, and even the ladies' gallery was packed not with the proverbial sardines, but with more picturesque butterflies. An animated full dress debate was expected and punctually at eleven o'clock almost every member was in his seat. But little did the busy whips, the officials swaggering in morning coats, the Nationalists and the Swarajists, all hopeful of a signal triumph, realise that before the bell for the division lobby would ring, another and more useful knell announcing the death of Mr. Harchandrai Vishindas, the oldest member of the Assembly, would sound and spread its pall of grief over the chamber. Little did these gentlemen know that at that very time, the great hero who at the risk of his life had undertaken to come to Delhi to record his lack of faith in the Simon Commission, was already preparing to lay himself on the altar of martyrdom. Immediately after lunch, I saw the non-official whips busy telephoning to various hospitals to obtain an ambulance to convey the brave Harchandrai to the Assembly. "Don't get him if he is not fit," said one gentleman.. "But he simply insists on coming," said one of the whips. They knew not that Mr. Harchandrai at that time had passed the stage when ambulances were needed, and had cast his vote finally and definitely in the lobby of immortality."

Seth Harchandrai was a true son of the Soil and the present National awakening in Sindh was due to his untiring efforts and his colleagues late Diwan Tahilram and late Honourable Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari. He was a Nationalist to the core and had a burning desire to serve Sindh and her people.

M.U. Abbasi



Harchandrai Vishandas

Shri Harchandrai Vishindas was one of the oldest veterans in the public life of Sindh and a staunch nationalist. His martyrdom was the crowning glory of his life which was a saga of service of the people. He belonged to the illustrious Bharvani family of Sindh, known for its public spirited members. Shri Harchandrai was born in a small village of Manjho in Sindh in May, 1862. He received his primary education in his birth place and went to Kotri for secondary education. He passed the Matriculation examination of the Bombay University in the year 1878. He graduated from the Elphinstone College, Bombay in the year 1882. In 1885 he obtained L.L.B. degree and returned to Sindh. He joined the legal profession and was elected Secretary of the Karachi Bar Association and held that position continuously for 38 years. He was elected President of the Karachi Municipality in 1911 and was continuously voted to that prestigious chair till 1921. He was elected to the first ever Bombay Legislative Council in 1909. He was returned again uncontested in 1912. In 1916 he was opposed by Diwan Bhojsingh Pahlajani of Sukkur whom he defeated by scoring 39 votes against a more 2 by his opponent. In 1920, Shri Harchandrai was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly for the only non-Muhammadan seat allotted to Sindh. He was again elected to the Central Assembly in the years 1923 and 1926.

Shri Harchandrai was intimately associated with the Indian National Congress in its early phase. He attended as delegate most of the Congress sessions, from 1888 onwards. He was elected Chairman of the Reception

Committee of the 28th session of the Indian National Congress held at Karachi in the year 1913.

When the all white Simon Commission was deputed to India to review the working of the 1919 reforms, the Congress Party decided to press for its boycott by getting a resolution passed to that effect in the Central Assembly. Harchandrai's vote was required for that purpose. He was lying in a sick bed at Karachi at that time.. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, 'The Nightingale of India', came down to Karachi to impress upon Shri Harchandrai the imperative need of his presence in the Assembly for that purpose. Harchandrai defied his doctors and went to Delhi in response to the call of duty. Alas! he breathed his last on his way from the Railway Station to the Assembly Hall.

In order to honour the memory of Harchandrai the Reception Committee of the 1931 session of the Congress held at Karachi named the Congress township as "Harchandrai Nagar," which was indeed a fitting tribute to Sindh's veteran nationalist, whose long dedicated career ended in martyrdom.

Buldev Gajra

A Newsman's Tribute

I knew nothing about the man until Khadim Hussain Soomro, a friend from Sindh, told me about him. The man was called Seth Harchandrai Vishandas who, Soomro insists, was, if not the founding father, then certainly one of the architects of modern Karachi. Soomro may be exaggerating but let me share the information he gave me about Harchandrai with you.

Son of a prosperous businessman, Seth Vishandas, Harchandrai was born in a small village, Manjho, in 1862. After receiving his early education in the village, he was sent to Kotri where the missionaries had set up an Anglo-Vernacular school. He studied there up to class VIII after which his father sent him to Karachi where he joined the N.G.V High School. He matriculated in 1878.

Incidentally, this was the first year the matriculation examination was held in Karachi. Previously, it was held in Bombay, going where was as good as undertaking a journey to the moon. By sea, one required more than two weeks to go from Karachi to Bombay. And do you know what was the land route? By 1861, rail travel up to Kotri had become possible. From Kotri, you went by steam boat to Multan and from there to Lahore by rail. From Lahore, you took the train to Delhi from where you went to Ahmedabad via Jaipur. Ajmer, Palanpur and so on a back-breaking vehicle. And finally from Ahmedabad you went by train to Bombay.

In 1874, this journey took a mere four months. Just try and map the route in your mind. Had I been around at the time, I would have thrown myself to the crocodiles or into a snakepit than acquire a certificate affirming

that I had passed the matriculation examination. A fat lot of good my matriculation would have done me.

Anyhow, after matriculating, Harchandrai went to Bombay (by sea or by road?) and joined the Elphinstone College, graduating in 1882. Between 1857 and 1886 just 13 Sindhi young men graduated with only one of them, Choharmal Kundanmal getting a first class in 1865. Of these 13 pioneering graduates, only one was a Muslim, Mirza Sadiq Ali Faridoon Beg (1872). Just one — Dayaram G. Shahani (1878) won a scholarship. Harchandrai did his law, also in Bombay, returned to Sindh and accepted a junior job in a Shikarpur court.

His father would have none of it and he persuaded his son to set up a law practice. Quick on the uptake, Harchandrai made a name for himself in a very short period of time and began to receive briefs from all over Sindh. He was elected honorary secretary of the Karachi Bar Association, founded in 1820 and held this office for three decades and more without a break. So well did he run his law company that 17 of his clerks themselves became advocates. One of them, Qimatrai, became president of the Karachi Bar Association.

But it is not with Harchandrai the lawyer that we are concerned here but with Harchandrai the city father. His career as a municipal councillor and president and later as a legislator was phenomenal. The foundations of the Karachi municipality were laid by Sir Charles Napier. In 1846, a cholera epidemic took a heavy toll of life and Sir Charles set up a board of conservancy to improve sanitary conditions in Karachi. It was dissolved in 1851 and replaced by the Karachi municipal commission the following year. It was headed by Sir HBF Frere. Among Frere's successors was Col C.F. Boulton.

The Karachi municipality was founded (probably) in 1884. Seth Harchandrai was president of the municipality from 1911 to 1921. These were the years in which he transformed Karachi from a sleepy little

fishing town into a modern city. The municipality was given corporation status in 1922. From 1933 to 1947 the following served as mayors of Karachi.

Jamshed Nausserwanji, Tikamdas Wadhmal, Qazi Khuda Bux, Ardeshir H. Mama, Durgadas Advani, Hatim Alvi, R.K. Sidhwa, Lalji Mehrotra, Mohammad Hashim Gazdar, Sohrab K.H. Katrak, Shimbhunath Moolraj, Yusuf Haroon, Imanuel Misquita, Vishramdas Dewadas, Hakeem Muhammad Ahsan Fateh Muhammad and G.A. Allana.

Harchandrai Vishandas became a member of the municipality in 1888. He resigned in 1896 to be made legal advisor to the civic body. He was re-elected as a councillor in 1910. A year later, he became president for a memorable term spanning over ten years.

Among the first things he did was to rationalise revenue collection. His taxation policy could well be followed to great advantage even today. And it was very simple: reduce the tax payable so that more people can pay it. It is like this: tax due, Rs. 100. Ten people pay it total collection Rs. 1,000. Now you lower the tax of Rs. 50. Thirty people pay and pay willingly. Collection Rs. 1,500 — a net increase of 50 percent. Harchandrai was that kind of tax collector.

What is the best incentive for honest, hard work? For Harchandrai it was: pay them more and they will work after hours without demanding overtime. He raised the salary of the chief officer, on whom all work depended, to Rs. 1,400. That was in the second decade of the 20th century. Today, it would be more like Rs. 140,000.

Harchandrai turned then to city development. His first priority was the Old Town. Machhi Miani and Ranchore Lines were congested localities with narrow streets and lanes. They were widened and straightened. The Garden Quarters were incorporated into the city.

The most important thing that Harchandrai did was to change the course of the river Lyari which used to flow right through the middle of the city, causing much devastation when in flood. For this purpose, a bund was put up in the Dhobi Ghat near the Gandhi Bagh and the river was forced to change course. The old river bed was levelled and turned into valuable urban property. A new residential district came up on it and there was popular demand that it should be named after Harchandrai. He refused, saying that all credit went to engineer Lee who had made it possible. Hence the Lee Quarters.

As the city grew, Harchandrai persuaded the government to move the army away to the Drigh Road side and the land vacated came to be known as the Bunder Road Extension — later to be called Jamshed Quarters. Dry ponds such as Ratantalao were filled up and turned into public parks. He gave footpaths to Bunder Road, McLeod Road, Elphinstone Street. Among the roads widened were Clifton Road, and Lawrence Road. Manghopir Road came up during his tenure.

He laid the foundations of the new municipal offices on Bunder Road. Construction work started but was suspended because of World War I. He spent every penny of the municipality's development funds with the greatest circumspection and held himself accountable to the people.

In 1921, Seth Harchandrai Vishandas was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. This required that he should be in Delhi for six to seven months. This left him very little time in which to attend to Karachi's affairs and, therefore, like the honest man he was, Harchandrai resigned as president of the municipality. He died in 1928.

When he took over in 1911, Karachi had a population of 151,904. When he left, it had risen to 216,883. I wonder how many of them are alive today —

and how many among them remember Seth Harchandrai Vishandas.

By Lahori
Dawn, July 12, 1996



A Glimpse of his Life

Born April 1862, at Manjho, Tehsil Kotri, District Karachi.

- (1) Educated at the N.J.V High School Karachi and Elphinstone College Bombay.
- (2) Passed L.L.B. examination in 1885. Was member of the Karachi Bar over 42 years, one of its leading members. A distinguished lawyer both Civil and Criminal. Hon. Secretary of the Karachi Bar Association from its inception till his death. Its zealous and able worker.
- (3) Karachi Municipality. Its member from 1888-1899, Legal Adviser 1899-1910, again member 1910-1921; its President 1911-1921, again member 1910-1921; its President 1911-1921. Rendered eminent services to the city. In 1921 resigned Municipality to give full attention to Assembly work at Delhi.
- (4) Legislative Council Bombay. Elected member of the Legislative Council Bombay 1910-1921. Was very prominent member; great admirer and supporter of Sir Perozshah Mehta and Gokhale. Always voted on the popular side. His chief work in the council was about Primary Education, Police zulum, Rasai, Lapo and Chher, Irrigation improvement, Land assessment revision etc etc. Served on Rasai Committee and Matiari Shooting Tragedy Committee.
- (5) Legislative Assembly Delhi. Member of the Indian Legislative Assembly from the very first, 1921 to till his death at Delhi on 10th February 1928. In elections never stood on any party ticket. His vote

was always on the popular side. One of its prominent and oldest member. His Budget Speeches were listened to with attention Resigned when the Viceroy Certificate the Salt Tax, as a protest and was no elected. His speeches against Repressive Measures in the Punjab, on Release of Mahatma Gandhi, on Certification Powers of the Governor General, Abolition of Cotton Excise duty, Return to India of Mr. Horniman, Hindu Religious and Charitable Trust Bill, against Prince Protection Bill, Criminal and Civil Procedure (Amendment) bills, Sukkur Barrage, Railways for Sindh, etc. are well known.

- (6) Karachi Port Trust. First joined Port Trust in April 1911 and had been a trustee for an aggregate period of nearly nine years. Was elected vice-chairman of the Board on three successive occasions. Took "keenest interest in the progress of the port."
- (7) D.J. Sindh College. Helped Diwan Dayaram Gidumal in raising funds for founding the College. Was also member of the Board for a number of years. Took "keen interest in the betterment of the College."
- (8) Sindhi Gymkhana. One of the founders, its President and its oldest member.
- (9) Karachi Club. One of the founders. Elected President of the club twice. Regular visitor. "His charm of genial personality, his ready wit and humour and store of anecdotes endeared him to all."
- (10) War League and War Funds. In the World War of 1914-18 very much helped the committee in collecting the funds for the entertainment of wounded soldiers arriving at Karachi. Frequently visited military hospitals to chat and sympathise with soldiers.
- (11) Hindu Gymkhana. Was President of the Hindu Gymkhana Association. Took leading part in

- founding the Gymkhana. "Upto last continued to take very keen interest in its affairs."
- (12)Khalikdina Hall and Library. Member of the Library until his death. Also its president for several years.
 - (13)Lady Dufferin Hospital and Louis Lawrence Institute: "Member of the Committee for many years, always shown sympathy, "annually supported the institute in a most generous way."
 - (14)Idarieu Poor Welfare Association. Was one of the founders. Its President for a year. Chairman of its committee from its birth till his death. Helped the Association "with his unfailing tact, wise counsels and cheerful enthusiasm."
 - (15)Karachi Health Association. One of the founders. Its president for a number of years. Was "instrumental in getting the initial amount subscribed, with his zeal and energy the Association has reached on sound footing."
 - (16)Sanatan Dharam Mandal. Was a member of the Mandal, "greatly helped the Mandal both monetarily and by his valuable advice."
 - (17)Arya Samaj Karachi. Always helped the Samaj. Took interest in their social and educational activities.
 - (18)Nava Vidhan Brahmo Samaj. Was one of the trustees of the Samaj. "Fulfilled his duties in an ideal manner."
 - (19)Karachi Panjrapole Association. "Helped the Association fully."
 - (20)Hindu Town People's Association. Was its Patron.
 - (21)Karachi Indian Merchants Association. Was member of its Managing Committee and its representative on the Port Trust. Rendered valuable services to the Association.
 - (22)Citizens Association Karachi. He was one of the founders and its President for many years.
 - (23)Congress. Joined Congress in 1888 at the age of 26. Took leading part at the annual Session of the

Congress upto 1920) as the sole Spokesman of Sindh. Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress held at Karachi 1913. Always staunch congressman.

- (24) Provincial Conferences. Took important part in the 9th Bombay Provincial Conference held at Karachi under the Presidentship of Sir N.G. Chandravarkar, in 1896. President, First Provincial Conference held at Sukkur in 1908. President Special Conferences on Reforms held at Hyderabad in 1917. Chairman of the Reception Committee of the 5th Provincial Conference at Karachi in 1918, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Common-wealth of India Bill Conference at Karachi in 1926.
- (25) Sindh Hindu Sabha. President of the Sindh Hindu Sabha for many years. President of the Karachi Hindu Sabha upto last. Freely advised and helped Punchayats and Deputations. Helped Sukkur Hindus by twice going to Bombay with their deputation to wait upon the Governor in connection with the Sukkur Cremation Grounds.
- (26) The Sindh League of Progress (1922). One of the founders and its first chairman..
- (27) Plague 1897-99. Rendered excellent services during the Plague epidemic in Karachi in 1897-99 by helping people of different quarters. Managing his father's private plague hospitals, Cheap grain shops and Free food bhandar.
- (28) Hindu Muslim Unity. Took special interest in establishing peace and unity between Hindus and Muslims.
- (29) Death. Died at Delhi on 16th February 1928. Though ill and very weak, he left Karachi against the advice of doctors and friends to record his vote against the Simon Commission but died "at the post of duty."

- (30) After return from abroad and obtaining Bar-at-Law, it is reported that Mr. M.A. Jinnah worked for sometime, in the chambers of Seth Harchandrai, who had been their family advocate.
- (31) In the famous case crown vs Jaffar Fadu, Seth Harchandrai defended Fudo, an eminent businessman of Karachi. Fadu was also editor of the Phoenix and Praja Mitra. Fadu had revolted against His Highness late Sir Agha Khan and had disowned his religious loyalty to the Ismaili sect. He got converted into an Imamia Shia and became target of Agha Khan's decree of excommunication from Khoja brotherhood. He was ably defended in this contested case in 1906 by Seth Harchandrai.
- (32) On November 3, 1917 an extraordinary session of the provincial conference was held in Hyderabad, in which a committee was constituted for the separation of Sindh from Bombay. The moving spirit of this committee was Seth Harchandrai Vishandas and a memorandum was given a shape to prepare the material which formed the basis of the separation of Sindh and presented for the reforms before Mr. Montague, the secretary of state Lord Chelmsford and the viceroy of India who had come to Sindh.

R.B. Vishindas

Late R.B. Vishindas Nihalchand was born in 1843 in Manjho, a village near the railway junction of Kotri in Sindh and came from a family of land-owners and merchants. Like his father, Seth Nihalchand, he early showed signs in his life of a complete contempt for life's pelf and pleasure, and his heart longed for a life of renunciation. When he was 18, he left his home in quest of a teacher, a Guru who should reveal to him the profound mysteries of Life and he walked all the way from his home in Sindh to the Punjab, where near Lahore, his good fortune led him to the famous saint Gulabdas with whom he stayed long being instructed by him in the Philosophy of Atman, the timeless, spaceless Self. He was one of the pioneers of Cotton ginning business in Sindh and the province was dotted with his cotton ginning factories, cotton baling-press and Rice thrashing Factories at Manjho, Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Dadu and Badeh. He owned a fleet of Boats at Kotri which plied between Sukkur and Ketibunder while he had several "Dangees" at Karachi which sailed so far as Persian Gulf, Malabar Coast and Madras. He was the biggest forest contractor of his times in Sindh and had established a big Commission business at Karachi.

While his chief interests at this stage were the management of his vast lands and commerce which had made him one of the wealthiest men in Sindh, he took a considerable part in local and political affairs. He attended the first, second and third session of the Indian National Congress and upto the end of his long life was a member of the Karachi District Local Board and the President of the Kotri Tehsil Local Board. It was, however, in the sphere of social reform that he carved

out a great name for himself in the minds of his countrymen. Fifty years ago he had the vision almost prophetic of the numerous ills which the system of Deti-Leti was fostering in the Hindu society and with a view to provide a radical cure for this malignant disease he composed a book on the subject which he sent free to different Panchayats in Sindh. He then started a whirlwind propaganda by undertaking tours from village to village and town to town, instructing Panchayats and educating public, from Kotri to Laki, Hyderabad to Mirpurkhas and Shahdadpur, also in Naushehro, Moro and Kandiaro Tehsils. He convened in 1900 at Uderolal and again in 1905 at Hyderabad, conferences of Bhaibund Panchayats and had rules of procedure framed in regard to certain reforms and Deti Leti which continue to this day to guide the Hindu Bhaibund Panchayats of Sindh.

Another phase of his life, that of the selfless servant of humanity came to the front, during the year 1896-97 when Karachi was visited by bubonic plague. He opened a big Hospital (for both indoor and outdoor patients) which he put in charge of that famous physician Dr. Nazareth and where irrespective of communal considerations, free medicines and nursing was provided for the stricken. Free food and clothing supplies were provided to all who needed them. When in 1897 plague broke out at Kotri, he repaired to that place and served the people zealously. In token of his countrywide philanthropy, Government honoured him in 1898 by conferring on him the title of Rai Bahadur. In his birth place at Manjho he founded a school, he built a library at Kotri. At Hyderabad where he had taken up his residential quarters, near the bank of Fuleli Canal, known as Vishin Nagar, he opened a school, a hospital, a Rest house and a cheap grain shop. A model Zamindar, an ideal merchant, a great philanthropist, poet, artist, philosopher and a mystic such was Seth Vishindas,

Verily a Superman. His birthday is celebrated annually at Vishin Nagar and a big mella "Fair" is held for three days in the month of Akbar.

He gave the highest education to his children. His eldest son Seth Harchandrai, C.I.E., was one of our greatest leaders. His grandson Seth Sukhdev, Lakshman, Ramchand and Bharat look after the ginning factory at Hyderabad and the Commission agency business at Karachi. His another grandson Seth Hiralal Bharvani is the Principal of the D.G. National College at Hyderabad. Seth Atmaram Harchandrai is an advocate at Karachi and is attached to the firm of advocates called after his father, Messrs. Harchandrai & Co. His eldest grandson Seth Sukhdev continues to maintain the traditions of the family in the field of politics and had taken prominent part in the Satyagrah movement of 1930, 1932 and 1942 when he was thrice sentenced to terms of imprisonment and detention.

Seth Sukhdev Udhavdas

Seth Sukhdev Udhavdas, Zamindar, Land Lord and Cotton Merchant, Karachi. Born in 1896. Is Director, Karachi Cotton Association Ltd.; Member Managing Committee, Karachi Indian Merchants Association; Trustee, Karachi Port Trust Board; Member, Board of Refrees. Excess Profit Tax 1940; Member, Sindh Provincial Congress Election Tribunal; Member Sindh Cotton Committee for three years; Member Provincial Transport Authority, Sindh. In 1942 resigned Port Trust, Sindh Cotton Committee P.T.A. as Protest at Gandhi; Congress Members arrest. Arrested and made security Prisoner on 21st October 1942. Released from Sukkur Special Prison on 28th June 1943. Was Director of Karachi Hindu Co-operative Bank 1937/39 and its Chairman 1938/39. Took Prominent part in Satyagrah

Movements 1930 and 32, and 1942. Twice jailed and fined Rs. 3500/-. During last Great War, joined as Sepoy in Indian Defence Force. Grandfather, Rai Bahadur Seth Vishindas Nihalchand.

Member Indian Legislative Assembly 1945 to 1947 then he stayed in Pakistan and continued to be member of Pakistan Till 1954 — took active role to maintain peace in Karachi during the riots of after partition. One important thing is that the Seth Sukhdev was very conversant and expert with labour laws and labour policy of the Sindh region. In 1948 Indian Govt. requested Pakistan Govt. to donate the services of Seth Sukhdev to represent India in a conference of International Labour Organisation and Pakistan Govt. exceeded the request of Indian Govt. and deputed Seth Sukhdev. Seth Sukhdev was the friend of Mararjidesai and both had remain together in the same cell in Ahmed Nagar Prison.

Principal Bharvai Hiralal

Principal Bharvani Hiralal Srichand, B.A., (Bom.), M.A., (Cantab.), Bar-at-law, was born on 17th April 1905 and was educated at the N.J.V High School and D.J. Sindh College, Karachi. As a student he had a brilliant career and was the recipient of innumerable prizes and scholarships. He stood first class first in Sindh in his B.A. Examination with English and Persian. He was appointed a full-fledged Professor of English in Sindh National College, Hyderabad in 1925 before he was 21 years old, perhaps the youngest Professor in India. He proceeded to England in 1927, passed English Tripos (Honours) at Cambridge with French and Italian as his subsidiary languages in 1930. He was unanimously elected President of the Indian Majlis Cambridge. During the same year he was called to the Bar from the Honourable Society of Lincolns' Inn. He joined

Harchandrai and Company as an advocate in January 1931. He rejoined Sindh National College as senior Professor of English and French on the day when the college was renamed after Diwan Dayaram Gidumal (June 1932). He has been the Principal of the college since December 1938. He has travelled in every part of India and Ceylon and has visited Europe 7 times seeing the Seven Wonders of the World. He is a writer of many learned articles and is a debator of rare power and charm and has improved the College in all directions. During his days the college has grown from more to more, the number of students having risen from under 300 to over 600 within four years. He is a keen Mason having been Right Worshipful Master of his mother lodge Sir Charles Napier (1064 S.C.). He is the President of Rotary Club, Hyderabad, and an old Member of Daldas and Bhaibund Clubs besides the Karachi Club. His hobbies are Travelling, Music and Novel reading. He has been a University Examiner upto B.A. and is a Member of Bombay University Students Welfare Committee. He comes from one of the best families of Sindh, being son of Seth Srichand a Land Lord and Zamindar and is the nephew of Late Harchandrai Vishindas a leading light of Sindh and grandson of Seth Vishindas Nihalchand.

FAMILY

● Other renowned family members of Seth Harchandrai Vishandas family: Seth Srichand, Udhaudas, Atmaram, Surajprakash, Sachanand, Lachmandas, Ramchand, Bharatraj, Doulat, Kishinchand, Bhagwan, Dr. Ishwerlal.

The role of prominent lawyers of different provinces of British India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in establishing tradition of service to humanity is a glorious chapter in the history of liberation movements. They were the pioneers who had the vision and the strength to speak for the mother land and their fellow countrymen. They worked hard to safeguard the social, political, cultural, administrative and religious rights of the future generations. They worked without expecting any return from their people because they were clear in their mind that the day of deliverance will not be possible in their life time but it did not dissuade them to continue efforts for the liberation of humanity. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to these noble souls without whose efforts the independence movement would not have borne fruit in August 1947.

Syed Afzal Haidar